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THE GREEN HAND

THE GREEN HAND

Adventures of a Naval Lieutenant

BY

GEORGE CUPPLES

AUTHOR OF "THE TWO FRIGATES"



SANDS & COMPANY
23 BEDFORD STREET, LONDON, W.C.
AND EDINBURGH.

THE
GREEN HAND

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LIFE OF GEORGE CUPPLES

(AUTHOR OF "THE GREEN HAND")

EXCEPTING for one short episode—that, indeed, to which we owe "The Green Hand"—the life of George Cupples was almost devoid of those external incidents and vicissitudes which lend the interest of romance to biographical narrative. It is therefore possible, even within the narrow limits assigned to the present sketch, to satisfy reasonable curiosity regarding the mere facts of this distinguished author's career.

Cupples was, by virtue of two or three generations, a son of the manse. His grandfather, the Rev. George Cupples, was the minister of Swinton; and his father, who bore the same name, was also a minister. The George Cupples with whom we have to do was born at Legerwood, in Berwickshire, on the 2nd of August 1822. He was the eldest of the family, which consisted, including George, of three sons and one daughter. The father was a clergyman of orthodox views, and from the descriptions of him that have been left we may infer that the severity of his Calvinism had imparted a decided severity to his character. "He was much respected," says his son Joseph, "and, indeed, a good deal feared." The children were accordingly treated by him with rigid strictness, modified by their mother's greater leniency.

This stern master was George's only teacher during the first ten years of his life. His books were an Arithmetic, Cordery, Ruddiman's Rudiments, and Cornelius Nepos. In his tenth year he and his brother Joseph went to school at Earlstoun, "walking daily a weary four and a half miles and back again—to lessons at home!"

George was in his twelfth year when his father was "translated" to Stirling. While the family was settled

here, the wish to go to sea seems to have grown in the boy's mind to a settled determination, fostered, it appears, by his reading of novels, of which he was extremely fond. He was sixteen years of age when his father, probably much against his will, allowed him to be apprenticed as a sailor. So it came about that the minister's son, nurtured on the classics and Calvinism with quite different purposes in view, made a voyage to India and back—an eighteen months' affair it turned out—as a ship's boy.

On the nature of his experiences we need not speak here, for whoever reads "The Green Hand" will understand it without further aid. As his biographer strikingly says: "It had a physical effect on him . . . made him quiet and still in every expression, in every externality of life afterwards." At all events, the young adventurer returned home perfectly cured of his taste for the sea, petitioned his father to get his indentures cancelled, and declared he would content himself for the future on land.

Resuming his interrupted studies, he proceeded to Edinburgh University, where he took the Arts course. One of the professors was Wilson, the famous "Christopher North," for whom Cupples felt an admiration scarcely short of hero-worship, and of whom he afterwards wrote a "Memorial Sketch." Later on he went through the Divinity course, and had the privilege of sitting at the feet of the great Chalmers, of whom he always writes with enthusiasm.

But though prepared and equipped for the paternal calling, Cupples "recoiled from the stairs of the pulpit," more, it would seem, from a growing inclination to literature than from any heterodoxy in his religious views. He became a contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, where his essay on Emerson appeared in 1848. In *Maga* also was first published "The Green Hand," that magnificent story of the sea which we are now sending forth, to delight and enthrall, we feel sure, a new generation of readers. Two opinions may here

be quoted of the story, to which each of our readers may afterwards add his own. George MacDonald pronounced it "the best sea-novel I have ever read"; and Clark Russell, whose right to speak on such a subject will scarcely be disputed, declares "it is the colours of 'The Green Hand' that I have nailed to my mast."

Cupples was a constant and unwearied writer. Much of his work was done for newspapers and periodicals, but even the most ephemeral of his productions bore testimony to the earnest and solid qualities of the man. That these qualities were duly appreciated is proved by the frequent kindly mention of him by men of the highest literary repute.

He was married, in 1858, to Ann Jane Douglas, an Edinburgh lady, who, though much younger than her husband, was singularly congenial in her tastes and pursuits. She has written a large number of books, mostly for children.

Even before the time of his marriage, Cupples suffered from the *sequelæ* of hip-joint disease, and all the remainder of his life he seems never to have been quite free from the burden of ill-health. His home during his literary career was in different parts of Edinburgh or its vicinity, latterly in Newhaven, where he succumbed to heart-disease on the 17th of October 1891. His tombstone testifies to the admiration of his friends for his "varied literary gifts, and his simple, upright, and reverent character."

One of the literary projects which Cupples had long cherished has been happily carried out since his death in the publication, by Messrs Blackwood, of a splendid volume on "Scotch Deerhounds and their Masters." This volume contains a fine portrait of the author, and also an interesting memoir, written by Dr Hutchison Stirling, which is in itself at once a tribute and a testimony to the lasting impression which both the works and the character of George Cupples made upon cultured and critical minds.

the first of the year, the city was in a state of great excitement, and the people were very much interested in the result of the election. The city was divided into two parties, the Federalists and the Republicans, and the result of the election was very much contested. The Federalists were the party of the establishment, and the Republicans were the party of the people. The result of the election was a very close one, and the people were very much interested in the result.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE popularity of "The Green Hand," both among seamen and others, as being true to life, has been wide. It has, however, been thought desirable to issue a revised edition, freed from various expressions now to a certain extent obsolete or otherwise unsuitable, so as to make it more thoroughly fit for juvenile readers.

Some considerable time has now elapsed since the period to which these adventures refer, not without producing a good deal of alteration in much that goes on at sea, most especially in the outward accessories of nautical life. The spanking frigate of former days, for instance, is now no more; her place being, to the eye at any rate, ill taken up by the ironclad screw-steamer. The mechanical appliances have been improved, particularly in the merchant service, as, for example, by the Patent-Reefing-Topsail, which is only one of the countless new helps to the seaman. In navigation, instead of now taking five, six, or seven months to reach Australia from this country, the captain of any clipper-line sailing ship would be ashamed of himself if he did not do it within three. Not to multiply cases, Jack himself has, as a rule, added the moustache to his exuberance of whisker; he thinks better than he used to do of these excellent institutions, the Sailors' Homes; he is frequently a temperance man, and has even been known to take the chair at a meeting for vindication of sailors' rights.

But the state of the case, from a plain practical point of view, is pretty well illustrated by an anecdote current at sea among fore-castle story-tellers. According to them, a singular discovery was made, some forty years or so back, in Portsmouth harbour, aboard no less conspicuous a craft than that immortal three-decker hulk, H.M.S. *Victory* herself, when some alterations were being made down in her lower decks. There certain of the dockyard people, having occasion to lift

a small out-of-the-way lazarette hatch, down on the after-part of the orlop, which had been long covered with old coils of hawsers or the like, were surprised to find a man lying beneath, who rubbed his eyes, stretched himself as if waking out of sleep, and was finally brought up on deck. From undoubted evidence, it turned out that he had been shut down in joke, under the effect of some strange potion, his rough messmates having, of course, intended to release him before long; but a sudden commotion of a more important nature had arisen, owing to which they had forgotten him until too late, being themselves appointed on active service abroad. Hence it occurred that he had been left there, fast enclosed and asleep, ever since shortly after Trafalgar, when the *Victory* had come home with Nelson's body, and been paid off, dismantled, and moored in her place as a hulk. From a young reefer, this gentleman had meanwhile grown into a grizzled oldster, on midshipman's half-pay, not likely to have his services further required, seeing that the French had long ceased to offer battle afloat. He was, however, freely invited into professional society, where his opinions on the changes that had taken place were naturally much looked to. The things he is said to have principally remarked as new, were that pigtails had gone out of fashion; the midshipmen's messes were supplied with silver forks; boatswains—in stimulating the men at work—put more force into their language, less into their rattans, and that the leading-blocks of the mizzen-topsail-reef-tackles hung at the slings of the yard instead of being as formerly at the rim of the round-top; nor did he ever feel sure that such changes were for the better. This yarn, with a good moral tacked on at the end, in one form or another, still affords entertainment to many a tarry audience in ships outward bound, at second dog-watch time, when rolling down the Trades; particularly if spun by some fluent ex-man-o'-war's-man from any of Her Majesty's iron-clads. The said moral generally being to the effect, that little difference is made in essentials at sea by progress in the mere shoregoing world.

In the following story no great amount of correction requires to be made in bringing it up to date; and, except in a few minor points, I have left this to be done by each juvenile reader for himself, supposing the case that he should

ever find reason in his own professional experience. The terms *larboard* and *starboard* are both left in use throughout the book, although the former has long been replaced by the word *port*—which, in my time, was chiefly confined to the helm, when the resemblance of sound would always have been dangerous at a sudden emergency. The cry “All lar-bowlins ahoy!” no longer is added to the summons that rouses the sleepy watch below. But after everything is said, the main realities of sea-life continue to be what they were. There is constant truth in those grand words known to us all:

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save Thee—

* * * *

Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play,
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow.

The strangeness of foreign sights and tropical wonders has not altered; nor the thrill of excitement amid tempest; wind and weather are no-way different; the sailor feels as much pride as ever in his ship's good qualities; the occasion of danger still brings out his manhood; hearts-of-oak will always be ready to man our floating bulwarks so long as Britain remains.

If it were only in order to express a hearty belief in this, I am glad to have had the opportunity afforded by the few words prefixed to a fresh edition of “*The Green Hand*.” And to all you young readers who must ere long embark upon the troubled sea of life, success and a good voyage to you is the cordial wish of your sincere friend,

THE AUTHOR.

Edinburgh, August 31, 1878.

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THE GREEN HAND

CHAPTER I



H! Come, old ship, give us a yarn!" said the younger forecastle-men to an old one, on board of an Indiaman then swiftly cleaving the waves of the western Atlantic before the trade-wind, and outward-bound, with a hearty crew and a number of passengers. It was the second of the two dog-watches; and, the ship being still in the region of evening twilights, her men, in a good humour and with leisure, were then usually disposed, as on this occasion, to make fast their roaming thoughts by help of a good yarn, when it could be got. There were plenty of individuals, amongst a crew of forty, calculated by their experience, or else by their flow of spirits and fancy, to spin it. Each watch into which they were divided had its especial story-teller, with whose merits it twitted the other, and on opportunity of a general reunion, they were pitted against one another like two fighting-cocks. The one was a grave, solemn, old North-Sea whaler, with one eye, who professed to look down with contempt upon all raw head-work, on navigation compared with seamanship, and fiction against fact. As for himself, he rested all his fame upon actual experience, and told long dry narratives of old shipmates, of his voyages and adventures, and sometimes of the most incredible incidents, with a genuine briny gusto, which pleased the veteran staggers beyond expression. They were full of points of seamanship—expedients for nice emergencies, tacks, knots, and splices; he gave the very conversation of his characters, with all the "says he" and "says I"; and one long recital of the old

fellow's turned upon the question between himself and a new-fangled second-mate, about the right way to set up back-stays, in which he, the sailor, was proved correct by the loss of the ship. The other story-teller, again, was a Wapping man; a lively, impudent young Cockney, who had the most miraculous faculty of telling lies—not only palpable lies, but lies absolutely impossible; yet they were so sublimely told often, and he contrived to lug into them such a quantity of gorgeous tinsel ornament, as, in his happier efforts, decidedly to carry the day against his opponent. The London hand had seen *life* too, of which, with respect to what is called the world, his competitor was as ignorant as a child. He had his sentimental vein, accordingly, in which he took the last love-tale out of some "Penny Story-Teller" or fashionable novel he had spelled over below, and made of it a parody that would have thrown its unfortunate author into convulsions of horror, and his critics into shrieks of laughter. The fine language of lords and ladies, of romantic heroines, or of foreign counts and bandits, was gravely retailed, and gravely listened to by a throng of admiring jack-tars; while the old whaler smoked his pipe sulkily apart, gave now and then a scornful glance out of his weather-eye, and called it "all *high-die*' and soger's gammon."

On this occasion, however, the group for'ard did not solicit the services of either candidate, as they happened to have present among them a shipmate who, by general confession, "took the shine" out of both, although it was rarely they could get hold of him. "Old Jack," the captain's private steward, was the oldest seaman on board, and having known the captain when the latter went to sea, had sailed with him almost ever since he commanded a ship, as well as lived in his house on shore. He did not now keep his watch, nor take his "trick at the helm," except when he chose, and was altogether a privileged sort of person, or one of "the idlers." His name was Jacobs, which afforded a pretext for calling him "Old Jack," with the sailor's fondness for that Christian cognomen, which it is difficult to account for, unless because Jonah and St John were seafaring characters, and the Roman Catholic holy clerk St Nicholas was baptised "Davy Jones," with sundry other reasons good at sea. But Old Jack was, at any rate, the best hand for a yarn in the *Gloucester* Indiaman,

and had been once or twice called upon to spin one to the ladies and gentlemen in the cuddy. It was partly because of his inexhaustible fund of good-humour, and partly from that love of the sea which looked out through all that the old tar had seen and undergone, and which made him still follow the bowsprit, although able to live comfortably ashore. In his blue jacket, his white canvas trousers edged with blue, and glazed hat, coming forward to the galley to light his pipe, after serving the captain's tea of an evening, Old Jack looked out over the bulwarks, sniffed the sharp sea-air, and stood with his shirt-sleeve fluttering as he put his finger in his pipe, the very embodiment of the scene—the model of a prime old salt who had ceased to “rough it,” but could do so yet if needful.

“Come, old ship!” said the men near the windlass, as soon as Old Jack came forward, “give us a yarn, will ye?” “Yarn!” said Jack, smiling—“what yarn, mates? ’Tis a fine night, though, for that same—the clouds flies high, and she’s balling off a good ten knots sin’ eight bells.” “That she is, bo’—so give us a yarn now, like a reg’lar old A1, as you are!” said one. “Vast there, mate,” said a man-o’-war’s-man, winking to the rest—“you’re always a-cargo-puddling, Bill! D’ye think Old Jack answers to any other hail nor the Queen’s? I say, old three-decker in or’nary, we all wants one o’ your close-laid yarns this good night. Whaling Jim here rubs his down with a thought overmuch o’ the tar, an’ young Joe dips ’em in yallow varnish—so if you says nay, why, we’ll all save our grog, and get slewed as soon as may be.” “Well, well, mates,” said Jack, endeavouring to conceal his flattered feelings, “what’s it to be, though?” “Let’s see,” said the man-o’-war’s-man—“ay, give us the Green Hand!” “Ay, ay, the Green Hand!” exclaimed one and all. This “Green Hand” was a story Old Jack had already related several times, but always with such amusing variations, that it seemed on each repetition a new one—the listeners testifying their satisfaction by growls of rough laughter, and by the emphatic way in which, during a pause, they squirted their tobacco-juice on the deck. What gave additional zest to this particular yarn, too, was the fact of its hero being no less than the captain himself, who was at this moment on the poop quarter-deck of the ship, pointing out something to a group of ladies by the

round-house—a tall good-looking man of about forty, with all the mingled gravity and frank good-humour of a sailor in his firm weather-tinted countenance. To have the power of secretly contrasting his present position and manners with those delineated by Old Jack's episode from the "skipper's" previous biography, was the *acme* of comic delight to these rude sons of Neptune, and the narrator just hit this point.

"Ye see," began he, "'tis about six-an'-twenty year gone since I was an able seaman before the mast, in a small Indyman they called the *Chester Castle*, lying at that time behind the Isle of Dogs in sight of Grennidge Hospital. She was full laden, but there was a strong breeze blowing up that wouldn't let us get under weigh; and, besides, we waited for the most part of our hands. I had sailed with the same ship two voyages before; so, says the captain to me one day, 'Jacobs, there's a lady over at Greenwich yonder wants to send her boy to sea in the ship—for a sickening I s'pose. I'm a-going up to town myself,' says he, 'so take the small quarter-boat and two of the boys, and go ashore with this letter, and see the young fool. From what I've heard,' says the skipper, 'he's a jackanapes as will give us more trouble than thanks. However, if you find the lady's bent on it, why she may send him aboard to-morrow if she likes. Only we don't carry no young gentlemen, and if he slings his hammock here, you must lick him into shape. I'll make a sailor of him, or else a cabin boy.' 'Ay, ay, sir,' says I, shoving the letter into my hat; so in half-an-hour's time I knocks at the door of the lady's house, rigged out in my best, and hands over the screed to a fat fellow with red breeches and yaller swabs on his shoulders, like a captain of marines, that looked frightened at my hail, for I thou't he'd been deaf by the long spell he took before he opened the door. In five minutes I hears a woman's v'ice ask at the footman if there was a sailor a-waiting below. 'Yes, marm,' says he; and 'show him up,' says she. Well, I gives a scrape with my larboard foot, and a tug to my hair, when I gets to the door of *sich* a fine room above decks as ever you see, all full o' tables, an' chairs, an' sofers, an' piangers, an' them sort o' highflying consarns. There was a lady all in silks and satins on one of the sofers, dressed out like a widow, with a pretty little girl as was playing music out of a large portmankey—and a pieter of a man upon the wall, which I at

once logged it down for his as she'd parted company from. 'Sarvint, marm,' says I. 'Come in, my good man,' says the lady. 'You're a sailor?' says she—asking, like, to be sure if I warn't the cook's mate in dish-guise, I fancy. 'Well, marm,' I raps out, 'I make bould to say as I hopes I am!'—an' I catches a sight o' myself in a big looking-glass behind the lady, as large as our sky-sail—and, being a young fellow in them days, thinks I, 'Blow me, if Betsy Brown axed me that now, I'd up an' hax her if *she* war a *woman*!' 'Well,' says she, 'Captain Steel tells me, in this here letter, he's a-going to take my son. Now,' says she, 'I'm sore against it—couldn't you say some'at to turn his mind?' 'The best way for that, yer ladyship,' says I, 'is for to let him go, if it was only the length of the Nore. The sea'll turn his stomich for him, marm,' I says, 'an' then we can send him home by the pilot.' 'He wanted for to go into the navy,' says the lady again, 'but I couldn't think on that for a moment, on account of this here fearful war; an', after all, he'll be safer in sailing at sea nor in the army or navy—doesn't you think so, my good man?' 'It's all you knows about it,' thinks I; hows'ever, I said there wasn't a doubt on it. 'Is Captain Steel a rash man?' says she. 'How so, marm?' says I, some'at taken aback. 'I hope he does not sail at night, or in storms, like too many of his profession, I'm afeard,' says she; 'I hope he always weighs the anchor in such cases, very careful.' 'Oh, in course,' says I, not knowin', for the life of me, what she meant. I didn't like to come the rig over the poor lady, seein' her so anxious like; but it was no use, we was on such different tacks, ye see. 'Oh yes, marm,' I says, 'Captain Steel al'ays reefs taups'ls at sight of a squall brewing to wind'rd; and then we're as safe as a church, ye know, with a man at the wheel as knows his duty.' 'This relieves my mind,' the lady says, 'wery much'; but I couldn't think why she kept sniffing all the time at her smelling-bottle, as she wor agoin' to faint. 'Don't take it to heart so, yer ladyship,' I says at last; 'I'll look after the young gentleman till he finds his sea-legs.' 'Thank you,' says she; 'but I beg your parding, would ye be kind enough for to open the winder, and look out if you see Edward? I think he's in the garding—I feel sich a smell of pitch and tar!' I hears her say to the girl! and says she to me again, 'Do you see

Edward there?—give a call to him, please. Accordently, I couldn't miss sight of three or four young slips alongside, for they made plenty of noise—one of 'em on top of a water-barrel smoking a sea-gar; another singing out inside of it for mercy; and the rest roaring round about it, like so many Bedlamites. 'No wonder the young scamp wants off to sea,' thinks I, 'he's got nothin' arthly to do but mischief.' 'Which be's the young gentleman, marm?' says I, lookin' back into the room—'is it him with the sea-gar and the red skull-cap?' 'Yes,' says the lady—'call him up, please.' 'Hallo!' I sings out, and all runs off but him on the barrel, and 'Hallo!' says he. 'You're wanted on deck here, sir,' I says; and in five minutes in comes my young gemman, as grave as you please. 'Edward,' says his mother, 'this is one of Captain Steel's men.' 'Is he going to take me?' says the young fellow, with his hands in his pockets. 'Well, sir,' I says, 'tis a very bad look-out, is the sea, for them as don't like it. You'll be sorry ten times over you've left sich a berth as this here, afore you're down Channel.' The young chap looks me all over from clue to earing, and says he, 'My mother told you to say that!' 'No, sir,' says I, 'I says it on my own hook.' 'Why did you go yourself, then?' says he. 'I couldn't help it,' answers I. 'Oh,' says the impertinent little beggar, 'but you're only one of the common sailors, ain't you?' 'Split me!' thinks I, 'if I doesn't show you the odds betwixt a common sailor, as ye call it, and a lubber of a boy, before long!' But I wasn't goin' to let him take the jaw out o' me, so I only laughed, an' says I, 'Why, I'm captain of the foretop at sea, anyhow.' 'Where's your huniform, then?' says the boy, lowering his tone a bit. 'Oh,' I says, 'we doesn't al'ays wear huniform, ye know, sir. This here's what we call ondress.' 'I'm sorry, sir,' says the lady, 'I didn't ax you to sit down.' 'No offence at all, marm,' I says, but I took a couple o' glasses of brandy as was brought in. I saw 'twas no use goin' against the young chap; so, when he asked what he'd have to do aboard, I told him nothing to speak of, except count the sails now and then, look over the bows to see how the ship went, and go aloft with a spy-glass. 'Oh,' says his mother at this, 'I hope Captain Steel won't never allow Edward to go up those dangerous ladders! It is my pertic'lar request he should be

punished if he does.' 'Sartinly, marm, I'll mention it to the captain,' I says, 'an' no doubt he'll give them orders as you speak on. The captain desired me to say the young gentleman could come aboard as soon as he likes,' says I before goin' out of the door. 'Very well, sir,' says the lady, 'I shall see the tailor this same arternoon, and get his clothes, if so be it must.' The last word I said was, I puts my head half in again to tell 'em, 'There was no use gettin' any huniforms at present, seein' the ship's sailmaker could do all as was wanted arterwards, when we got to sea.'

"Well, two or three days after, the captain sent word to say the ship would drop down with the morning tide, and Master Collins had better be aboard by six o'clock. I went ashore with the boat, but the young gemman's clothes warn't ready yet; so it was reg'lar made up he was to come on board from Gravesend the day after. But his mother and an old lady, a friend of theirs, would have it they'd go and see his bedroom, and take a look at the ship. There was a bit of a breeze with the tide, and the old Indyman bobbed up and down on it in the cold morning; you could hear the wash of the water a-poppling on to her counter, with her running-gear blown out in a bend; and Missus Collins thought they'd never get up the dirty black sides of the vessel, as she called 'em. The other said her husband had been a captain, an' she laid claim to a snatch of knowledge. 'Sailor,' says she to me, as we got under the quarter, 'that there tall mast is the main-bowsprit, ain't it? and that other is the gallant bowling you call it, don't you?' says she. 'No doubt, marm,' says I, winking to the boys not to laugh. 'It's all right,' I says. Howsoever, as to the bedroom, the captain showed 'em over the cabin, and put 'em off by saying the ship was so out of order he couldn't say which rooms was to be which yet, though they needn't fear Master Ned would get all comfortable; so ashore the poor woman went, pretty well pleased, considerin' her heart was against the whole consarn.

"Well, the next afternoon, lying off Gravesend, out comes a wherry with young master. One of the men said there was a midshipman in it. 'Midshipman be blowed!' says I; 'did ye ever see a reefer in a wherry, or sitting anywheres out o' the starn-sheets? It's neither more nor less nor this precious greenhorn as we've got.' 'Why don't the bo'sun pipe to man

side-ropes for him?' says t'other; but, 'my eye, Bob,' says he to me, 'what a sight of traps the chap's got in the boat!—'twill be enough to heel the *Chester Castle* to the side he berths upon, on an even keel. Do he mean to have the captain's cabin, I wonder!' Up the side he scrambles, with the help of a side-ladder, all toggged out to the nines in a span-new blue jacket and anchor buttons, a cap with a gould band, and white ducks made to fit—as jemmy-jessamy a looking fellow as you'd see of a cruise along London parks—with the waterman singing out alongside to send down a tackle for the dunnage, which it took a pair of purchase-blocks to hoist them out on board. 'What's all this?' says the mate, coming for'ard from the quarter-deck. 'Tis the young gemman's traps, sir,' I says. Says the mate, 'D'ye think we've got spare room to stow all this lumber? Strike it down into the forehold, Jacobs—and get out a old blue shirt or two, and a Scotch cap, for the young whelp first, if he wants to save that smooth toggery of his for his mammy. You're as green as cabbage, I'm feared, my lad!' says he. By this time the boy was struck all of a heap, an' didn't know what to say when he saw the boat pulling for shore, except he wanted to have a sight of his bedroom. 'Jacobs,' says the mate, laughing like an old bear, 'take him below, and show him his bedroom, as he calls it!' So down we went to the half-deck, where the carpenter, bo'sun, and three or four of the 'prentices, had their hammocks slung. There I leaves him to overhaul his big donkey of a chest, which his mother had stowed it with clothes enough for a lord ambassador, but not a blessed thing fit to use—I wouldn't 'a given my bit of a black locker for the whole on it, ten times over. There was another choke-full of gingerbread, pots o' presarves, pickles, and bottles; and, thinks I, 'The old lady didn't know what *shares* is at sea I reckon. 'Twill all be gone for footing, my boy, before you've seen blue water, or I'm a Dutchman.'

"In a short time we was up anchor, going down with a fast breeze for the Nore; and we stood out to sea that night, having to join a convoy off Spithead. My gentleman was turned in all standing, on top o' some sails below; and next day he was as sick as a greenhorn could be, cleaning out his land-ballast where he lay, nor I didn't see him till he'd got

better. 'Twas blowing a strong breeze, with light canvas all in aloft, and a single reef in the tops'ls; but fine enough for the Channel, except the rain—when what does I see but the 'Green Hand' on the weather quarter-deck, holding on by the belaying pins, with a yumbereller over his head. The men for'ard was all in a roar, but none of the officers was on deck save the third mate. The mate goes up to him, and looks in his face. 'Why,' says he, 'you confounded long-shore, picked-up son of a greengrocer, what *are* you after?' an' he takes the article a slap with his larboard-flipper, as sent it flying to leeward like a puff of smoke. 'Keep off the quarter-deck, you lubber,' says he, giving him a wheel down into the lee-scuppers—'it's well the captain didn't catch ye! Come aft here, some of ye,' sings out the third mate again, 'to brace up the mainyard; and you, ye lazy beggar, clap on this moment and pull!' At this the greenhorn looks round doubtful, like, then at last he takes out a pair o' double gloves, shoves his fingers into 'em, and tails on to the rope behind. 'Well!' says the mate, 'if I ever see the likes o' that! Jacobs, get a tar-bucket and dip his fists in it; larn him what his hands were made for! I never could a-bear to see a fellow ashore with his flippers shoed like his feet; but at sea, confound me, it would make a man green-sick over again.' If you'd only seen how Master Collins looked when I shoved his missy fingers into the tar, and chucked them gloves o'board! The next moment he ups fist and made a slap at me, when in goes the brush in his mouth; the mate gives him a kick astarn; and the young chap went sprawling down into the half-deck ladder, where the carpenter had his shavin'-glass rigged to crop his chin—and there he gets another clip across the jaws from Chips. 'Now,' says the mate, 'the chap'll be liker a sailor to-morrow. He's got some spunk in him, though, by the way he let drive at you, my lad,' says he; 'that fellow'll either catch the cat or spoil the monkey. Look after him, Jacobs, my lad,' says the third mate; 'he's in my watch, and the captain wants him to rough it out; so show him the ropes, and let him taste an end now an' then. Ha, ha, ha!' says he, again, laughing, 'tis the first time I ever see a umbrella loosed out at sea, and but the second I've seen brought aboard even. He's the greenest hand, sure enough, it's been my luck to come across! But green they say's

nigh to blue, so look out if I don't try to make a sailor of the young spark !'

"Well, for the next three or four days the poor fellow was knocked about on all hands ; he'd got to go aloft to the 'gallant cross-trees, and out on the yard foot-ropes the next morning, before breakfast ; and, coming down, in course, ye know, the men made him fast till he sent down the key of his bottle-chest to pay his footing. If he closed his eyes a moment in the watch, slash comes a bucketful o' Channel water over him. The third mate would keep him two hours on end, larnin' to rig out a sterns'l boom, or grease a royal mast. He led a dog's life of it, likewise, in the half-deck ; bein' last come, in course, he had al'ays to go and fill the bread-barge, scrub the planks, an' do all the dirty jobs. Them *owners' 'prentices*, sich as he had for messmates, is always worse to their own kind by far nor the '*comming sailors*,' as the longshore folks calls a foremast-man. I couldn't help takin' pity on the poor lad, bein' the only one as had known the way of his up-bringing, and I feels a sort of a charge of him like ; so one night I gets a quiet spell with him in the watch, an' as soon 's I fell to speak kind-ways, there I seed the water stand i' the boy's eyes. 'It's a good thing,' says he, tryin' to gulp it down—'it's a goo—good thing mother don't see all this !' 'Ho, ho !' says I, 'my lad, 'tis all but another way of bein' sea-sick ! You doesn't get the land cleared out, and sniff the blue breeze nat'ral like, all at once ! Hows'ever, my lad,' says I, 'take my advice—bring your hammock an' chest into the foc'sle ; swap half your fine clothes for blue shirts and canvas trousers ; turn to, ready and willing, an' do all that's asked you—you'll soon find the differings betwixt the men and a few petty officers an' 'prentices half out their time. The men'll soon make a sailor of you ; you'll see what a seaman is ; you'll larn ten times the knowledge ; an', add to that, you'll not be browbeat and looked jealous on !'

"Well, next night, what does he do but follers what I said, and afore long most of his troubles was naterally over ; nor there wasn't a willin'er nor a readier hand aboard, and every man was glad to put Ned through anything he'd got to do. The mates began to take note on him ; and though the 'prentices never left off calling him the Green Hand, before we rounded the Cape he could take his wheel with the best

of them, and clear away a sternsail out of the top in handsome style. We were out ten months, and Ned Collins stuck to the foc'sle throughout. When we got up the Thames, he went ashore to see his mother in a check shirt and canvas trousers made out of an old royal, with a tarpaulin hat I built for him myself. He would have me to come the next day over to the house for to have a supper; so, havin' took a kindness to the young chap, why, I couldn't say nay. There I finds him in the midst of a lot o' soft-faced slips and young ladies, a spinning the wonderfulest yarns about the sea and the East Ingees, makin' em swallow all sorts of horse-marines' nonsense, about marmads, sea-serpents, and sich like. 'Hallo, my hearty!' says he, as soon as he saw me, 'heave a-head here, and bring to an anchor in this here blessed chair. Young ladies,' says he, 'this is Bob Jacobs, as I told you kissed a marmad his-self. He's a wonderful hand, is Bob, for the fair ones!' You may fancy how flabbergasted I was at this, though the young scamp was as cool as you please, and wouldn't ha' needed much to make him kiss 'em all round; but I was al'ays milk-and-water alongside of women, if they topped at all above my rating. 'Well,' thinks I, 'my lad, I wouldn't ha' said five minutes ago, there was anything of the green about ye yet, but I see 'twill take another voy'ge to wash it all out.' For to my thinkin', mates, 'tis more of a land-lubber to come the rig over a few poor creators that never saw blue water, than not to know the ropes you warn't told. 'Oh, Mister Jacobs!' says Missus Collins to me that night, before I went off, 'd'ye think Edward is tired of that 'ere horridsome sea yet?' 'Well, marm,' I says, 'I'm afeared not. But I'll tell ye, marm,' says I, 'if you wants to make him cut the consarn, the only thing ye can do is to get him bound apprentice to it. From what I've seen of him, he's a lad that won't bear aught again his liberty; an' I do believe, if he thought he couldn't get free, he'd run the next day!' Well, after that, ye see, I didn't know what more turned up of it; for I went round to Hull, myself, and ships in a timbercraft for the Baltic, just to see som'at new.

"Now, one day, the third voy'ge from that time, no sooner does we get up to Blackwall than we hears of a strong press from the men-o'-war; and as I'd got a desperate mislike to the sarvice, there was a lot of us marchantmen kept stowed

away close in holes an' corners till we could suit ourselves. At last we got well tired, and a shipmate o' mine and I wanted to go and see our sweethearts over in the town. So we hired the slops from a Jew, and makes ourselves out to be a couple o' watermen, with badges to suit, a-carrying of a large parcle and a ticket on it. In the afternoon we came back again within sight of the Tower, where we saw the coast was clear, and makes a fair wind along Rosemary Lane and Cable Street. Just then we saw a tall young fellow, in a brown coat, an' a broad-brim hat, a-standing in the door of a shop, with a paper under his arm, on the lookout for someone. 'Twig the Quaker, Bob!' my shipmate says to me. As soon as he saw us, out the Quaker steps, and says he to Bill, in a sleepy sort of a v'ice, 'Friend, thou'rt a waterman, I b'lieve?' 'Yes,' says Bill, with an oath, 'that's what we hails for. D'ye want a boat, master?' 'Swear not, friend,' says the broad-brim; 'but what I want is this, you see. We have a large vessel, belonging to our house, for to send to Havannah, and willin' to give double wages, but we can't find any marineers at this present time for to navigate. Now,' says he, 'I s'pose this onfortunate state o' things is on account of the sinful war as is a-goin' on—they're afraid of the riskses. Hows'ever, my friends,' says he, 'perhaps, as you knows the river, thee could put us upon a way of engagin' twenty or more bold marineers, as is not afeared of venturing for good pay?' and with this he looks into his papers; and says Bill, 'Well, sir, I don't know any myself—do you, Bob?' and he gives me a shove, and says under the rose, 'No fear, mate,' says Bill, 'he's all over green—don't slip the chance for all hands of us at Jobson's.' 'Why, master,' I says, 'what 'ud ye give them marineers you speaks on, now?' 'Four pound a month, friend,' says he, looking up; 'but we gives tea in place of spirits, and we must have steady men. We can't wait, neither,' says he, 'more nor three days, or the vessel won't sail at all.' 'My eye!' says Bill, 'twon't do to miss, Bob!—stick to him, that's all.' 'Well, sir,' I says, 'I thinks I does have a notion of some'at of the sort. If you sends your papers to Jobson's Tavern to-night, second lane 'twixt Barnaby Street and the Blue Anchor Road, over the water, why, I might get ye as many hands for to sign as you wants.' 'Thanks, friend,' says the young broad-brim, 'I will

attend to thine advice.' So he bids us good-day, and stepped into his door again. 'Bill,' says I, as we went off, 'now I think on it, I can't help a notion I've seen that chap's face afore.' 'Very like,' says Bill; 'for the matter o' that, 'tis the same with me—they broad-brims is so much of a piece. But that 'ere fellow don't know nothin' of ships, sure enough, or he wouldn't offer what he did, and the crimps' houses all of a swarm with hands!'

"'Take my word, mate,' says I, 'it's a paying trip, or he wouldn't do it—leave a Quaker alone for that. Why, the chap's a parfit youngster, but I am blessed if he don't look as starched as if he'd sat over a dask for twenty year!'

"Well, strike me lucky, mates all, if the whole affair warn't a complete trap! Down comes a clerk with the papers, sure enough; but in ten minutes more the whole blessed lot of us was puckalowed, and hard an' fast, by a strong press-gang. They put us into a cutter off Redriff Stairs, and the next noon all hands was aboard of the *Pandora* frigate at Sheerness. The first time of being mustered on deck, says Bill to me, 'Cuss my eyes, Bob, if there isn't the 'farnal Quaker!' I looked, and sees a midshipman in uniform like the rest, and so it was. 'The sly, soft-sawderin' beggar!' says I. 'All fair in war, and a press, mate!' says one o' the frigate's men. All the while I kept looking and looking at the midshipman; and at last I says to Bill when we got below, giving a slap to my thigh, 'Blessed if it ain't! it's the *Green Hand* himself!' 'Green Hand!' says Bill, sulky enough, 'who's the Green Hand? Blow me, Bob, if I don't think we're the green hands ourselves, if that's what you're upon!' So I told him the story about Ned Collins. 'Well,' says he, 'if a fellow was green as Chineese rice, cuss me if the reefers' mess wouldn't take it all out on him in a dozen watches. The softest thing I know, as you say, Bob, just now, it's to come the smart hand when you're a lubber; but to sham green after that style, ye know, why, it is a mark or two above either you or I, messmate. So, for my part, I forgives the young scamp, 'cause I ought to ha' known better.'

"By the time the frigate got to sea the story was blowed over the whole main-deck; many a good laugh it gived the different messes; and Bill, the midshipman, and me, got the name of the 'Three Green Hands.'

"One middle-watch Mister Ned comes for'ard by the booms to me, and says he, 'Well, Bob Jacobs, you don't bear a grudge, I hope?' 'Why,' says I, 'Mister Collins, 'twould be mutiny now, I fancy, you being my officer.' So I gave a laugh; but I couldn't help feelin' hurt a little, 'twas so like a son turnin' against his father, as 'twere. 'Why, Bob,' says he, 'did ye think me so green as not to know a seaman when I saw him? I was afeared you'd know me that time.' 'Not I, sir,' I answers; 'why, if we hadn't sailed so long in company, I wouldn't know ye now!' So Master Ned gived me to understand it was all for old times he wanted to ship me in the same craft; but he knew my misliking to the sarvice, though he said he'd rather ha' lost the whole haul of 'em nor myself. So many a yarn we had together of a dark night, and for a couple of years we saw no small sarvice in the *Pandora*. But if ye'd seen Ned, the smartest reefer aboard, and the best liked by the men, in the fore-tops'l bunt in a gale, or over the main-deck hatch, with an enemy's frigate to leeward, or on a spree ashore at Lisbon or Naples, you wouldn't ha' said there was anything green in his eye, I warrant ye! He was made acting-leftenant of a prize he cut out near Chairboorg, before he passed examination; so he took me for his prize-bo'sun, and carried her into Plymouth. Soon after that the war was ended, and all hands of the *Pandora* paid off. Master Ned got passed with flying colours, and confirmed leftenant besides, but he had to wait for a ship. He made me say where I'd be found, and we parted company for about a year.

"Well, I was come home from a short trip, and one day Leftenant Collins hunts me up at Wapping Docks, where I'd had myself spliced, six years before, to Betsy Brown, an' was laid up for a spell, having seen a good deal of the sea. Ye must know the young leftenant was fell deep in love with a rich Indy nabooob's daughter, which had come over to take her back to the East Ingees. The old fellow was hard close-hauled again the match, notwithstanding of the young folks makin' it all up; so he'd taken out berths aboard of a large company's ship, and bought over the captain on no account to let any king's navy man within the gangways, nor not a shoulder with a swab upon it, red or blue, beyond the ship's company. But, above all, the old tyrant wouldn't have a

blue-jacket, from stem to stern, if so be he'd got nothing ado but talk sweet; I s'pose he fancied his girl was mad after the whole blessed cloth. The lieutenant turns over this here log to me, and, says he, 'I'll follow her to the world's end, if need be, Bob, and cheat the old villain!' 'Quite right, too, sir,' says I. 'Bob,' says he, 'I'll tell you what I wants you for to do. Go you and enter for the *Seringapatam* at Blackwall, if you're for sea just now; I'm goin' for to s'cure my passage myself, an' no doubt doorin' the voy'ge something'll turn up to set all square; at any rate, I'll stand by for a rope to pull!' 'Why, here's a rum go!' thinks I to myself. 'Is Ned Collins got so green again, spite of all that's come and gone, for to think the waves is a-goin' to work wonders, or ould Neptune under the line's to play the parson and splice all!' 'Well, sir,' I says, 'but don't you think the skipper will smoke your weather-roll, sir, at sea, as you did Bill Pikes an' me, you know, sir?' says I. 'Oh, Bob, my lad,' says the lieutenant, 'leave you that to me. The fellow most onlikest to a sailor on the Indyman's poop will be me, and that's the way you'll know me.'

"Well, ship I does with the *Seringapatam* for Bombay—plenty of passengers she had; but only clerks, nabooobs, old half-pay fellows, and ladies, not to speak o' children and nurses, black and white. She sailed without my seein' Lieutenant Collins, so I thought I was to hear no more on it. When the passengers began to muster on the poop, by the time we got out o' Channel, I takes a look over the ladies, in coilin' up the ropes aft, or at the wheel; I knowed the said girl at once by her good looks, and the old fellow by his grumpy, yallow frontispiece. All on a sudden I takes a note of a figger coming up from the cuddy, which I made out at once for my Master Ned, spite of his wig and a pair o' high-heeled boots, as gave him the walk of a chap a-treading amongst eggs. When I hears him lisp out to the skipper at the round-house if there was any fear of wind, 'twas all I could do to keep the juice in my cheek. Away he goes up to windward, holding on by everything, to look over the bulwarks behind his sweetheart, givin' me a glance over his shoulder. At night I see the two hold a sort of colloque abaft the wheel, when I was on my trick at the helm. After awhile there was a row got up amongst the passengers, with

the old nabooob and the skipper, to find out who it was that kept a-singing every still night in the first watch, alongside of the ladies' cabin, under the poop. It couldn't be cleared up, hows'ever, who it was. All sorts o' places they said it comed from—mizzen-chains, quarter-galleries, lower-deck ports, and davit-boats. But what put the old hunks most in a rage was, the songs was every one on 'em such as 'Rule Britannia,' 'Bay of Biscay,' 'Britannia's Bulwarks,' and 'All in the Downs.' The captain was all at sea about it, and none of the men would say anything, for by all accounts 'twas the best pipe at a sea-song as was to be heard. For my part, I knowed pretty well what was afloat. One night a man comed for'ard from the wheel, after steering his dog-watch out, and 'Well, I'm blessed, mates,' says he on the foc'sle, 'but that chap aft yonder with the lady—he's about the greenest hand I've chanced to come across. What d'ye think I hears him say to old Yallow-chops an hour agone?' 'What was it, mate?' I says. 'Says he, "Do you know, Sar Chawls, is the hoshun reelly green at the line—*green* ye know, Sar Chawls, *reelly* green?"' "No, sir," says the old nabooob, "'tis blue." "Whoy, ye don't sa—ay so!" says the young chap, pullin' a long face.' 'Why, Jim,' another hand drops in, 'that's the very chap as sings them first-rate sea-songs of a night. I seed him myself come out o' the mizzen-chains!' 'Hallo!' says another at this, 'then there's some'at queer i' the wind! I *thought* he gave rather a weather-look aloft, comin' on deck i' the morning. I'll bet a week's grog that chap's desarted from the king's flag, mates!' Well, ye know, hereupon I couldn't do no less nor shove in my oar, so I takes word from all hands not to blow the gaff,* an' then gives 'em the whole yarn to the very day, about the Green Hand—for somehow or another I was al'ays a yarnin' sort of a customer. As soon as they heard it was a love consarn, not a man but swore to keep a stopper on his jaw; only, at findin' out he was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, all hands was for touching hats when they went past.

"Hows'ever, things went on till we'd crossed the line a good while; the lieutenant was making his way with the girl at every chance. But, as for the old fellow, I didn't see he was a fathom the nearer with *him*; though, as the nabooob

* Let out the secret.

had never clapped eyes on him to know him like, 'twan't much matter before heaving in sight o' port. The captain of the Indyman was a rum, old-fashioned codger, all for plain sailing and old ways—I shouldn't say overmuch of a smart seaman. He read the sarvice every Sunday, rigged the church an' all that, if it was anything short of a reef-taups'l breeze. 'Twas queer enough, ye may think, to hear the old boy drawling out, 'As 'twas in the beginning——' then, in the one key, 'Haul aft the mainsheet——' 'is now, and ever shall be——' 'Small pull with the weather brace——' 'Amen ——' 'Well the mainyard——' 'The Lord be with you——' 'Taups'l yard well!' As for the first orficer, he was a dandy, know-nothing young blade, as wanted to show off before the ladies; and the second was afraid to call the nose on his face his own, except in his watch; the third was a good seaman, but ye may well fancy the craft stood often a poor chance of being rightly handled.

"'Twas one arternoon watch, off the west coast of Africay, as hot a day as I ever mind on, we lost the breeze with a swell, and just as it got down smooth, land was made out, low upon the starboard bow, about south-east-and-by-sou', as near as may be. The captain was turned in sick below, and the first orficer on deck. I was at the wheel myself, and I hears him say to the second as how the land breeze would come off at night. A little after, up comes Leftenant Collins, in his black wig and his 'long-shore hat, an' he begins to squint over the stern to nor'west'ard. 'Jacobs, my lad,' whispers he to me, 'how do ye like the looks o' things?' 'Not overmuch, sir,' says I; 'small enough sea-room, leastways for a sky like that 'ere.' Up goes he to the first officer, after a bit. 'Sir,' says he, 'do ye notice how we've risen the land within the last hour and a half?' 'No, sir,' says the first mate. 'What d'ye mean?' 'Why, there's a current here, takin' us inside the point,' says he. 'Sir,' says the Company's man, 'if I didn't know what's what, d'ye think I'd learn it off a gentleman as is so confounded green? There's nothing of the sort,' he says. 'Look on the starboard quarter, then,' says the leftenant, 'at the man-o'-war bird afloat yonder with its wings spread. Take three minutes' look!' says he. Well, the mate did take a minute or two's squint through the mizzen-shroud, and

pretty blue he got, for the bird came abreast of the ship by that time.

“‘It’s a underdrift,’ says the leftenant, wonderful knowing-like—‘though it’s nothing on the surface, look ye, why, with the draught the ship has it’s a-taking her along like a tideway, below! Now, d’ye think you’d weather that there point two hours after this, if a gale come on from the nor’-west, sir?’ ‘Well,’ says the first mate, ‘I dare say we shouldn’t—but what of that?’ ‘Why, if you’d cruised for six months off the coast of Africa, as I’ve done,’ says the leftenant, ‘you’d think there was something ticklish about that white spot in the sky, to nor’-west! But on top o’ that, the weather-glass is fell a good bit since four bells.’ ‘Weather-glass!’ the mate says, ‘why, that don’t matter much in respect of a gale, I fancy.’ Ye must understand, weather-glasses wan’t come so much in fashion at that time, except in the Royal Navy. ‘Sir,’ says the mate again, ‘mind *your* business, if you’ve got any, and I’ll mind mine!’ ‘If I was you,’ the leftenant says, ‘I’d call the captain.’ ‘Thank ye,’ says the mate—‘call the captain for nothing!’ Well, in an hour more the land was quite plain on the starboard bow, and the mate comes aft again to Leftenant Collins. The clouds was beginning to grow out of the clear sky astarn too. ‘Why, sir,’ says the mate, ‘I’d no notion you was a *seaman* at all! What would you do yourself now, supposin’ the case you put a little ago?’ ‘Well, sir,’ says Mr Collins, ‘if you’ll do the thing, I’ll put ye up to it at once——’”

At this point of Old Jack’s story, however, a cabin-boy came from aft, to say that the captain wanted him. The old seaman knocked the ashes out of his pipe, which he had smoked at intervals in short puffs, put it in his jacket pocket, and got up off the windlass end. “Why, old ship!” said the man-o’-war’s-man, “are ye goin’ to leave us in the lurch with a *short yarn* again?” “Can’t help it, bo’,” said old Jack; “orders must be obeyed, ye know,” and away he went. “Well, mates,” said one, “if the yarn’s been overhauled before, what was the upshot of it? I didn’t hear it myself.” “Blessed if I know,” said several—“Old Jack didn’t get the length last time he’s got now.” “More luck!” said the man-o’-war’s-man; “’tis to be hoped he’ll finish it next time!”

CHAPTER II

WE left the forecastle group of the *Gloucester* disappointed by the abrupt departure of their story-teller, Old Jack, at so critical a thread of his yarn. As old Jacobs went aft on the quarter-deck, where the binnacle-lamp before her wheel was newly-lighted, he looked in with a seaman's instinct upon the compass-boxes, to see how the ship headed; ere ascending to the poop, he bestowed an approving nod upon his friend the steersman, hitched up his trousers, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand in a proper deference to female society, and then proceeded to answer the captain's summons. The passengers, in a body, had left the grand cabin to the bustling steward and his boys, previously to assembling there again for tea—not even excepting the little coterie of inveterate whist-players, and the pairs of inseparable chess-men, to whom an Indian voyage is so appropriately the school for future nice practice in etiquette, war, and commerce. Everybody had at last got rid of sea-sickness, and mustered for a promenade; so that the lofty poop of the Indiaman, dusky as it was, and exposed to the breeze, fluttered with gay dresses like the midway battlement of a castle by the waves, upon which its inmates have stolen out from some hot festivity. But the long heave from below, raising her stern-end slowly against the western space of clear-obscure, in the manner characteristic of a sea abaft the beam, and rolling her to either hand, exhibited to the eyes on the forecastle a sort of *alto relievo* of figures, amongst whom the male, in their blank attempts to appear nautical before the ladies, were distinguished from every other object by their variety of ridiculous postures. Under care of one or two bluff, good-humoured young mates—officers polished by previous opportunities of a kind unknown either to Navy-men or mere “cargo-fenders,” along with several roguish little quasi-midshipmen—the ladies were supported against the poop-rail, or seated on the after-gratings, where their contented dependence not only saved them from the ludicrous failures of their fellow-passengers, but gained them, especially the young ones, the credit of being better sailors. An accompaniment was contributed to this lively exercise on the part of the gentlemen promenaders, which otherwise in the glimmering sea-twilight, would have

been striking in a different sense ; by the efforts, namely, of a little band of amateur musicians under the break of the poop, who, with flute, clarionet, bugles, trombone, and violin, after sundry practisings by stealth, had for the first time assembled to play "Rule Britannia." What, indeed, with the occasional abrupt checks, wild flourishes, and fantastic variations caused by the ship's roll ; and what with the attitudes overhead, of holding on refractory hats and caps, of intensely resisting and staggering legs, or of sudden pausing above the slope which one moment before was an ascent, there was additional force in the designation quaintly given to such an aspect of things by the foremast Jacks—that of a "cuddy jig." As the still increasing motion, however, shook into side-places this central group of cadets, civilians, and planters adrift, the grander features of the scene predominated : the broad mass of the ship's hull—looming now across and now athwart the streak of sinking light behind—drawn out by the weltering outline of the waters ; the entire length of her white decks ever and anon exposed to view, with their parallel lines, their nautical appurtenances, the cluster of hardy men about the windlass, the two or three "old salts" rolling to and fro along the gangway, and the variety of forms blending into both railings of the poop. High out of, and over all, rose the lofty upper outline of the noble ship, statelier and statelier as the dusk closed in about her—the expanse of canvas whitening with sharper edge upon the gloom ; the hauled-up clues of the main-course, with their huge blocks, swelling and lifting to the fair wind—and the breasts of the topsails divided by their tightened buntlines, like the shape of some full-bosomed maiden, on which the reef-points heaved like silken fringes, as if three sisters, shadowy and goddess-like, trod in each other's steps towards the deeper solitude of the ocean ; while the tall spars, the interlacing complicated tracery, and the dark top-hamper showing between gave graceful unity to her figure ; and her three white trucks, far overhead, kept describing a small clear arc upon the deep blue zenith as she rolled : the man at the wheel midway before the doors of the poop-cabin, with the light of the binnacle upon his broad throat and bearded chin, was looking aloft at a single star that had come out beyond the clue of the main-topsail.

The last stroke of "six bells," or seven o'clock, which had

begun to be struck on the ship's bell when Old Jack broke off his story, still lingered on the ear as he brought up close to the starboard quarter-gallery, where a little green shed or pent-house afforded support and shelter to the ladies with the captain. The erect figure of the latter, as he lightly held one of his fair guests by the arm, while pointing out to her some object astern, still retained the attitude which had last caught the eyes of the forecastle group. The musical cadets had just begun to pass from "Rule Britannia" to "Shades of Evening"; and the old sailor, with his glazed hat in his hand, stood waiting respectfully for the captain's notice. The ladies, however, were gazing intently down upon the vessel's wake, where the vast shapes of the waves now sank down into a hollow, now rose seething up into the rudder-trunk, but all marked throughout with one broad winding track, where the huge body of the ship had swiftly passed. From foaming whiteness it melted into yesty green, that became in the hollow a path of soft light, where the sparks mingled like golden seed; the wave-tops glimmered beyond; star-like figures floated up or sank in their long undulations; and the broad swell that heaped itself on a sudden under the mounting stern bore its bells, and bubbles, and flashes upwards to the eye. When the ship rose high and steady upon it, and one saw down her massy taffrail, it looked to a terrestrial eye rather like some mystic current issuing from the archway under a tall tower, whose foundations rocked and heaved; and so said the romantic girl beside the captain, shuddering at the vividness of an image which so incongruously brought together the fathomless deep and the distant shores of solid old England. The eye of the seaman, however, suggested to him an image more akin to the profession, as he directed his fair companion's attention to the trough of the ship's furrow, where, against the last low gleam of twilight, and by the luminous wake, could be seen a little flock of black petrels, apparently running along it to catch what the mighty ploughshare had turned up; while a grey gull or two hovered aslant over them in the blue haze. As he looked round, too, to aloft, he exchanged glances with the old sailor who had listened—an expression which even the ladies understood. "Ah! Jacobs," said the captain, "get the lamp lighted in my cabin, and the tea-kettle aft. With the roll she has on her, 'twill be more ship-shape

there than in the cuddy." "Ay, ay, sir," said the old seaman. "How does she head just now, Jacobs?" "Sou'-west-and-by-south, sir." "She'd lie easier for the ladies though," said the captain, knowing his steward was a favourite with them, "were the wind a point or two less fair. Our old acquaintance, Captain Williamson of the *Seringapatam* now, Jacobs, old-fashioned as he was, would have braced in his lee-yard only to steady a lady's tea-cup." "Ay, your honour," replied Jacobs, and his weather-eye twinkled, "and washed the foc'sle under, too! But ye know, sir, he'd got a reg'lar-built nabooob aboard, and a beauty besides!" "Ah, Mr Jacobs!" exclaimed the romantic young lady, "what was that? Is it one of your stories?" "Well, your ladyship, 'tis a bit of a yarn, no doubt, and some'at of a curious one." "Oh!" said another of the captain's fair *protégées*, "I do love these 'yarns,' as you call them; they are so expressive, so—and all that sort of thing." "Nonsense, my love," said her mother; "you don't understand them, and 'tis better you should not—they are low, and contain a great many bad words, I fear." "But think of the imaginative feeling, aunt," rejoined the other girl, "and the adventures! Oh, the ocean of all places for that! Were it not for sea-sickness, I should dote upon it! As for the *storm* just now, look how safe we are, and see how the dear old ship rises up from the billows, with all her sails so delightfully mysterious one over another!" "Bless your heart, marm, yes," responded Old Jack, chuckling; "you talks just like a seaman, beggin' your pardon. As consarns the tea, sir, I make bold to expect the'll be a shift o' wind directly, and a slant deck, as soon as we get fair into the stream, rid o' this bit of a bubble the tail of it kicks up hereabouts." "Bear a hand then, Jacobs," said the captain, "and see all right below for the party in the cabin—we shall be down in a few minutes." The captain stood up on the quarter-gallery, to peer round into the dusk and watch the lifting of the main-royal; but the next minute he called to the ladies, and their next neighbours, to look towards the larboard bow, and see the moon rise. A long edge of gray haze lay around the eastern horizon, on which the dark rim of the sea was defined beyond the roll of the waves, as with the sweep of a soft brush dipped in indigo; while to westward it heaved up, weltering in its own watery light against the gloom. From behind this low fringe of

vapour was silently diffusing, as it were, a pool of faint radiance, like a brook bubbling from under ice; a thread of silver ran along the line of haze, growing keener at one point, until the arch of the moon shot slowly up, broad and fair: the wave-heads rising between were crested here and there with light; the bow of the ship, the bellies of her fore-canvas, her bowsprit with the jibs hanging idly over it, and the figurehead beneath, were tinged by a gentle lustre, while the hollow shadows stole out behind. The distant horizon, meanwhile, still lay in an obscure streak, which blended into the dark side of the low fog-bank, so as to give sea and cloud united the momentary appearance of one of those long rollers that turn over on a beach, with their glittering crest: you would expect to see next instant what actually seemed to take place—the whole outline plashing over in foam, and spreading itself clearly forward, as soon as the moon was free. With the airy space that flowed from her came out the whole eastern sea-board liquid and distinct, as if beyond either bow of the lifting Indianaman one sharp finger of a pair of compasses had flashed round, drawing a semi-circle upon the dull background, still cloudy, glimmering, and obscure. From the waves that undulated towards her stern, the ship was apparently entering upon a smoother zone, where the small surges leapt up and danced in moonshine, resembling more the current of some estuary in a full tide. To north-westward, just on the skirts of the dark, one wing of a large, soft-grey vapour was newly smitten by the moon-gleam; and over against it on the south-east, where the long fog-bank sank away, there stretched an expanse of ocean which, on its farthest verge, gave out a tint of the most delicate opal blue. The ship, to the south-westward of the Azores, and going large before the trade-wind, was now passing into the great Gulf Stream, which there runs to the south-east; even the passengers on deck were sensible of the rapid transition with which the lately cold breeze became warmer and fitful, and the motion of the vessel easier. They were surprised, on looking into the waves alongside, to perceive them struggling, as it were, under a trailing net-work of sea-weed; which, as far as one could distinctly see, appeared to keep down the masses of water, like so much oil—flattening their crests, neutralising the force of the wind, and communicating a strangely sombre green to the heaving element. In

the winding track of the ship's wake the eddies now absolutely blazed; the weeds she had crushed down rose to the surface again in gurgling circles of flames, and the showers of sparks came up seething on either side amongst the stalks and leaves; but as the moonlight grew more equally diffused, it was evident that she was only piercing an arm of that local weed-bed here formed, like an island, in the *bight* of the stream. Farther ahead were scattered patches and bunches of the true Florida Gulf-weed, white and moss-like; which, shining crisp in the level moonlight, and tipping the surges as it floated past, gave them the aspect of hoary-bearded waves, or the garlanded horses of Neptune. The sight still detained the captain's party on deck, and some of the ladies innocently thought these phenomena indicative of the proximity of land.

"I have seldom seen the Stream so distinct hereabouts," said Captain Collins to his first officer, who stood near, having charge of the watch. "Nor I, sir," replied the chief mate; "but it no doubt narrows with different seasons. There goes a flap of the fore-topsail, though! The wind fails, sir." "'Tis only drawing ahead, I think," said the captain; "the stream *sucks* the wind with its heat, and we shall have it pretty near from due nor'-west immediately." "Shall we round in on the starboard hand, then, sir, and keep both wind and current *aft*?" "I think not, Mr Wood," said the captain. "'Twould give us a good three knots more every hour of the next twenty-four, sir," persisted the officer eagerly—and chief mates generally confine their theories to mere immediate progress. "Yes," rejoined the captain, "but we should lose hold of the 'trade' on getting out of the stream again. I intend driving her across, with the nor'-wester on her starboard beam, so as to lie well up afterwards. Get the yards braced to larboard as you catch the breeze, Mr Wood, and make her course south-west by west." "Very well, sir." "Ladies," said the captain, "will you allow me to hand you below, where I fear Jacobs will be impatient with the tea?"

"What a pity, Captain Collins," remarked the romantic Miss Alicia, looking up as they descended the companion—"what a pity that you cannot have that delicious moonlight to shine in at your cabin windows just now; the sailors yonder have it all to themselves." "There is no favour in these

things at sea, Miss Alicia," said the captain, smiling. "Jack shares the chance there, at least, with his betters; but I can promise those who honour my poor suite of apartments this evening both fine moonshine and a steadier floor." On reaching the snug little after-cabin, with its swinging lamp and barometer, its side "state-room," seven feet long, and its two stern-windows showing a dark glimpse of the rolling waters, they found the tea-things set, nautical style, on the hard-a-weather, boxed-up table—the surgeon and one or two elderly gentlemen waiting, and old Jacobs still trimming up the sperm-oil lights. Mrs St Clair, presiding in virtue of relationship to their host, was still cautiously pouring out the requisite half-cups, when, above all the bustle and clatter in the cuddy, could be heard the sounds of ropes thrown down on deck, of the trampling watch, and the stentorian voice of the first officer. "Jacobs!" said the captain, a minute or two afterwards; and that worthy factotum instantly appeared from his pantry alongside of the door—from whence, by-the-way, the old seaman might be privy to the whole conversation—"stand by to *douse* the lamp when she heels," an order purposely mysterious to all else but the doctor. Everyone soon felt a change in the movement of their wave-born habitation; the rolling lift of her stern ceased; those who were looking into their cups saw the tea apparently take a decided inclination to larboard—as the facetious doctor observed, a "tendency to *port*." The floor gradually sloped down to the same hand, and a long, wild, gurgling wash was suddenly heard to run careering past the timbers of the starboard side.

"Dear me!" fervently exclaimed every lady at once; when the very next moment the lamps went out, and all was darkness. Captain Collins felt a little hand clutch his arm in nervous terror, but the fair owner of it said nothing; until, with still more startling effect than before, in a few seconds there shot through both stern windows the full rays of the moon, pouring their radiance into the cabin, shining on the backs of the books in the hanging shelves by the bulkhead, on the faces of the party, and the bald forehead of old Jacobs "standing by" the lamp—lastly, too, revealing the pretty little Alicia with her hand on the captain's arm, and her pale, terrified face. "Don't be alarmed, ladies!" said the surgeon,

"she's only hauled on the starboard tack!" "And her counter to the east," said the captain.

"But who put out the lamp?" rejoined the doctor. "Ah, I see, sir!—'But when the moon, refulgent lamp of night.'" "Such a surprise!" exclaimed the ladies, laughing, although as much frightened for a moment by the magical illumination as by the previous circumstances. "You see," said the captain, "we are not like a house—we can bring round our scenery to any window we choose." "Very prettily imagined it was, too, I declare!" observed a stout old Bombay officer, "and a fine compliment to the ladies, by Jingo, sir!" "If we had any of your pompous Bengal '*Quy hies*' here though, colonel," said the doctor, "they wouldn't stand being choused so unceremoniously out of the weather side, I suspect." "As to the agreeable little surprise I meant for the ladies," said Captain Collins, "I fear it was done awkwardly, never having commanded an Indiaman before, and laid up ashore these half-a-dozen years. But one's old feelings get freshened up, and without knowing the old *Gloucester's* points, I can't help reckoning her as a lady too—a very particular old '*Begum*,' that won't let anyone else be humoured before herself—especially as I took charge of her to oblige a friend." "How easily she goes now!" said the doctor, "and a gallant sight at this moment, I assure you, to anyone who chooses to put his head up the companion." "Ah, mamma!" said one of the girls, "couldn't you almost think this was our own little parlour at home with the moonlight coming through the window on both sides of the old elm, where we were sitting a month ago hearing about India and papa?"

"Ah!" responded her cousin, standing up, "but there was no track of moonshine dancing beyond the track of the ship yonder! How blue the water is, and how much warmer it has grown of a sudden!"

"We are crossing the great Gulf Stream," said the captain—"Jacobs! open one of the stern-ports." "'Tis the very place and time, this is," remarked a good-humoured cotton-grower from the Deccan, "for one of the colonel's tiger-hunts, now!" "Sir!" answered the old officer, rather testily, "I am not accustomed to thrust my *tiger-hunts*, as you choose to call my humble experiences, under people's noses!" "Certainly not, my dear sir," said the planter—"but what do

you say, ladies, to one of the captain's sea-yarns, then? Nothing better, I'm sure, here now, sir—eh?" Captain Collins smiled, and said he had never spun a yarn in his life, except when a boy, out of matter-of-fact old junk and tar. "Here is my steward, however," continued he, "who is the best hand at it I know, and I daresay he'll give you one." "Charming!" exclaimed the young ladies; and "What was that adventure, Mr Jacobs," said Miss Alicia, "with a beauty and a nabob in it, that you alluded to a short time ago?" "I didn't to say disactly include upon it, your ladyship," replied old Jacobs, with a tug of his hair, and a bow not just *à la maître*; "but the captain can give you it better nor I can, seeing as his honour were the Nero on it, as one may say." "Oh!" said the surgeon, rubbing his hands, "a lady and a rupee-eater in the case!" "There seems something curious about this said adventure of yours, my dear captain," said Mrs St Clair, archly, "and a beauty too! It makes me positively inquisitive, but I hope your own fair lady has heard the story?" "Why, not exactly, ma'am," replied Captain Collins, laughing as he caught the doctor looking preternaturally solemn, after a sly lee-wink to the colonel, who, having his back to the moonlight, stretched out his legs and indulged in a grim, silent chuckle, until his royal-tiger countenance was unhappily brought so far *flush** in the rays as to betray a singular daguerreotype, resembling one of those cut-paper phantasmagoria thrown on a drawing-room wall, unmistakably black and white, and in the character of Malicious Watchfulness. The rubicund, fidgety little cotton-grower twiddled his thumbs, and looked modestly down on the deck, with half-shut eyes, as if expecting some bold revelation of nautical depravity; while the romantic Miss Alicia coloured and was silent. "However," said the captain, coolly, "it is no matrimonial secret, at any rate! We both talk of it sometimes when we read the Church Service of a Sunday night at home, with Jacobs for the clerk." "Do, Mr Jacobs, oblige us!" requested the younger of the girls. "Well, miss," said he, smoothing down his hair in the doorway, and hemming, "'tain't neither for the likes o' me to refuse a lady, nor accordin' to rules for to give such a yarn in presence of a superrior officer, much less the captain; with a midship

* *Flush*—i.e. level.

helm, ye know, marm, ye earn't haul upon one tack nor the other. Not to say but next forenoon watch——" "I see, Jacobs, my man," interrupted Captain Collins, "there's nothing for it but to fore-reach upon you, or else you'll be 'Green-Handing' me aft as well as forward; so I must just make the best of it, and take the *winch* in my own fashion at once!" "Ay, ay, sir—ay, ay, your honour!" said Old Jack demurely, and concealing his gratification as he turned off into the pantry, with the idea of for the first time hearing the captain relate the incidents in question. "My old shipmate," said the latter, "is so fond of having trained his future captain, that it is his utmost delight to spin out everything we ever met with together into one endless yarn, which would go on from our first acquaintance to the present day, although no ship's company ever heard the last of it. Without falling knowingly to leeward of the truth, he makes out every lucky coincidence almost to have been a feat of mine, and puts in little fancies of his own, so as to give the whole thing more and more of a marvellous air the farther it goes. The most amusing thing is, that he almost always begins each time, I believe, at the very beginning, like a capstan without a paul—sticking in one thing he had forgot before, and forgetting another; sometimes dwelling longer on one part—a good deal like a ship making the same voyages over again. I knew, now, this evening, when I heard the men laughing, and saw Old Jack on the forecastle, what must be in the wind. However, we have shared so many chances, and I respect the old man so much, not to speak of his having dandled my little girls on his knee, and being butler, steward, and flower-gardener at home, that I can't really be angry at him, in spite of the sort of every man's rope he makes of me!" "How very amusing a character he is!" said one young lady. "A thought too tarry, perhaps?" suggested the surgeon. "So very original and like a—a seaman!" remarked Miss Alicia, quietly, but as if some other word that crossed her mind had been rejected, as descriptive of a different variety, probably higher. "*Original*, by Jove!" exclaimed the colonel; "if my *Khansa-man*, or my *Abdar*,* were to make such a dancing dervish and *tumasha*† of me behind back, by the holy Vishnu, sir, I'd rattan him myself within an inch of his life!"

* Steward and butler.

† Sport.

"Not an unlikely thing, colonel," put in the planter; "I've caught the scoundrels at that trick before now." "What did you do?" inquired the colonel, speculatively. "Couldn't help laughing, for my soul, sir; the *puckree-bund** rascals did it so well, and so funnily!" The irascible East-Indian almost started up in his imaginative fury, to call for his palkee, and chastise his whole verandah, when the doctor reminded him that it was a long way there. "Glorious East!" exclaimed the medico, looking out astern, "where we may cane our footmen, and whence, meanwhile, we can derive such Sanscrit-sounding adjurations, with such fine moonlight!"

The presence of the first officer was now added to the party, who came down for a cup of tea, fresh from duty, and flavouring strongly of a pilot cheroot. "How does she head, Mr Wood?" asked the captain. "Sou'-west-by-west, sir—a splendid night, under everything that will draw—spray up to the starboard cathead!"

"But as to this story, again, Captain Collins?" said Mrs St Clair, as soon as she had poured out the chief mate's cup. "Well," said the captain, "if you choose to listen till bedtime to a plain draught of the affair, why I suppose I must tell it you; and what remains then may stand over till next fine night. It *may* look a little romantic, being in the days when most people are such themselves, but, at any rate, we sailors—or else we should never have been at sea, you know; so you'll allow for that, and a spice to boot of what we used to call at sea 'lovemaking'; happily there were no soft speeches in it, like those in books, for then I shouldn't tell it at all.

"By the time I was twenty-four, I had been nine years at sea, and at the end of the war, was third lieutenant of a crack twenty-eight, the saucy *Iris*—as perfect a sloop-model, though over-sparred certainly, as ever was eased off the ways of Chatham, or careened to a north-easter. The Admiralty had almost learned to build by that day, and a glorious ship she was, *made* for going after the small fry of privateers, pirates, and slavers, that swarmed about the time. Though I had roughed it in all sorts of craft, from a first-rate to a dirty French lugger prize, and been eastward, so as to see the sea in its pride at the Pacific, yet the feeling you have depends

* Turban-wearing.

on the kind of ship you are in. I never knew so well what it was to be fond of a ship and the sea ; and when I heard of the poor *Iris*, that had never been used to anything but blue water on three parts of the horizon at least, laying her bones not long after near Wicklow Head, I couldn't help a gulp in the throat. I once dreamt I had gone down in her, and risen again to the surface with the loss of my brains, such as I had had ; while at the same moment, there I was, still sitting below on a locker in the wardroom, with the arms of her beautiful figure-head around me, and her mermaid's tail like the best-bower cable, with an anchor at the end of it far away out of soundings, over which I bobbed and dipped for years and years, in all weathers, like a buoy. We had no Mediterranean time of it, though, in the *Iris*, off the Guinea coast, from Cape Palmas to Cape Negro ; looking out to windward for white squalls, and to leeward for black ones, and inshore for Spanish cattle-dealers, as we called them, had made us all as sharp as so many marling-spikes ; and our captain was a man that taught us seamanship, with a trick or two beyond. The slavers had not got to be so clever then, either, with their schooners and clippers : they built for stowage, and took the chance, so that we sent in *bale* after *bale* to the West India admiral, made money, and enjoyed ourselves now and then at the Cape de Verdes. However, this kind of thing was so popular at home, as pickings after the great haul was over, that the *Iris* had to give up her station to a post-frigate, and be paid-off. The war was over, and nobody could expect to be promoted without a friend near the blue table-cloth, although a quiet hint to a secretary's palm would work wonders, if strong enough. But most of such lucky fellows as ourselves dissipated their funds in blazing away at balls and parties, where the gold band was everything, and the ladies wore blue ribbons and anchor brooches in honour of the navy. The men spent everything in a fortnight, even to their clothes, and had little further chance of eating the king's biscuit with hopes of prize-money ; I used to see knots of them, in red shirts and dirty slops, amongst the foremast Jacks in outward-bound ships, dropping past Greenwich, and waving their hats to the Hospital. You knew them at once by one of them giving the song for the topsail-halliards, instead of the merchantmen's bull's chorus ; indeed, I could

always pick off the dashing men-o'-war's-men, by face and eye alone, out from among the others, who looked as sober and solitary, with their serious faces and way of going about a thing, as if everyone of them was the whole crew. I once read a bit of poetry called the 'Ancient Mariner,' to old Jacobs, who by-the-by is something of a breed betwixt the two kinds, and his remark was: 'That old chap warn't used to hoisting altogether with a run, your honour!' By his looks I'd say he was bred where there was few in a watch, and the watch-tackle laid out pretty often for an eke to drag down the fore-tack.'

"As I was riding down to Croydon in Surrey, where my mother and sister had gone to live, I fell in with a sample of the hard shifts the men-o'-war's-men were put to in getting across from harbour to some merchant port, when all their money was chucked away. It was at a little town called Bromley, where I brought to by the door of a tavern and had a pail for the horse, with a bottle of cider for myself at the open window, the afternoon being hot. There was a crowd of townspeople at the other end of the street, country bumpkins and boys—women looking out at the windows, dogs barking, and children shouting—the whole concern bearing down upon us.

"'What's all this?' said I to the ostler.

"'Don't know, sir,' said he, scratching his head; 'tis very hodd, sir! That corner is rather a sharp turn for the coach, sir, and she do sometimes run over a child there, or something. But 'tain't her time yet! Nothink else hever 'appens 'ere, sir.'

"As soon as I could hear or see distinctly for the confusion, I observed the magnet of it to be a party of five or six regular blue-jackets, a good deal battered in their rig, who were roaring out sea-songs in grand style as they came along, leading what I thought at first was a bear. The chief words I heard were what I knew well. 'We'll disregard their tommy-hawks, likewise their scalping-knives—and fight alongside of our mates to save our precious lives—like British tars and souldiers in the North Americay!'

"On getting abreast of the inn door, and finding an offing with good holding-ground, I suppose, they hove to and struck up the 'Buffalo,' that finest of chants for the weather fore-

castle with a spanking breeze, outward bound, and the pilot lately dropped :

“Come, all you young men and maidens, that *wishes* for to sail,
 And I will let you hear of where you must a-roam ;
 We'll embark into a ship which her taups'ls is let fall,
 And all unto an ileyand where we never will go home ;
 Especialye you *ladies* that's anxious for to rove—
 There's *fishes* in the sea, my love, likewise the buck an' doe,
 We'll lie down—on the *banks*—of yon pleasant shadye gro-ove,
 Through the wild woods we'll wander and we'll chase the buffalo—ho—
 ho—
 We'll chase the buffalO !

“I really couldn't help laughing to see the slapping, big-bearded fellows, like so many foretopmen, showing off in this manner—one mahogany-faced thoroughbred leading, the rest thundering in at the chorus, with a tremendous stress on the ‘Lo—ho—ho,’ that made the good Bromley folks gape. As to singing for money, however, I knew no true tar with his members whole would do it ; and I supposed it to be merely some ‘spree ashore,’ until the curious-looking object from behind was lugged forward by a couple of ropes, proving to be a human figure above six feet high, with a rough canvas cover as far as the knees. What with three holes at the face, and the strange colour of the legs, which were bare—with a pair of turned-up India shoes, and the whole shape like a walking smoke-funnel over a ship's caboose—I was puzzled what they would be at. The leading tar immediately took off his hat, waved it round for a clear space, and gave a hem ! while he pointed to the mysterious creature. ‘Now my lads!’ said he, ‘this here wonderful bein’ is a savitch we brought aboard of us from the Andyman Isles, where he was caught one mornin’ paddling round the ship in a canoe made out of the bark of a sartain tree. Bein’ the ownly spice of the sort brought to this country as yet is, and we havin’ run short of the needful to take us to the next port, we expects every lady and gemman as has the wherewithal will give us a lift by consideration of this same cur’ous sight, and doesn’t—’ ‘Heave ahead, Tom, lad!’ said another encouragingly, as the sailor brought up fairly out of breath. ‘Doesn’t want no man’s money for nou’t d’ye see, but all fair an’ above board. We’re not agoin’ to show this ere sight excep’ you makes up half-a-guinea amongst ye—arter that all hands may see shot-

free—their's the articles!' 'Ay, ay, Tom, well said, old ship!' observed the rest; and, after a considerable clinking of coin amongst the crowd, the required sum was poured, in pence and sixpences, into Tom's hat. 'All right!' said he, as soon as he had counted it—'hoist away the tarpaulin, mates!' For my part, I was rather surprised at the rare appearance of this said savage, when his cover was off—his legs and arms naked, his face streaked with yellow, and both parts the colour of red boom-varnish; his red hair done up in a tuft, with feathers all round it, and a bright feather tippet over his shoulders, as he stood, six feet in his yellow slippers, and looking sulkily enough at the people. 'Bobbery puckalow!' said the nautical head-showman, and all at once up jumped the Andaman islander, dancing furiously, holding a little Indian *punkah* over his head, and flourishing with the other hand what reminded me strongly of a ship's top-maul—shouting 'Goor—goor—gooree!' while two of the sailors held on by the ropes. The crowd made plenty of room, and Tom proceeded to explain to them very civilly, that 'in them parts 'twas so hot the natives wouldn't fight, save under a portiable awning.' Having exhibited the points of their extraordinary savage, he was calmed again by another uncouth word of command, when the man-o'-war's-man attempted a further *traverse* on the good Bromley folks, for which I gave him great credit. 'Now, my lads and lasses,' said he, taking off his hat again, 'I s'pose you're all British subjects and Englishmen!' at which there was a murmur of applause. 'Very good, mates all!' continued the foretopman, approvingly. 'Then, in course, ye knows as how whatsoever touches British ground is *free*!' 'Britons never, never shall be slaves!' sung out a boy, and the screaming and hurrahing was universal. Tom stuck his tongue in his cheek to his messmates, and went on: 'Though we was all pressed ourselves, and has knocked about in sarvice of our king and country, an' bein' poor men, we honours the flag, my lads!' 'Hoorah! hoorah! hoor-r-ray!' 'So you see, gemmen, my shipmates an' me has come to the resolve of lettin' this here wild savidge go free into the woods—though bein' poor men, d'ye see, we hopes ye'll make it up to us a bit first! What d'ye say, all hands?—slump together for the other guinea, will ye, and off he goes this minute, and—— Eh? what d'ye say, shipmates?'

‘Ay, ay, Tom, sink the damage, too!’ said his comrades; ‘we’ll always get a berth at Blackwall, again!’

“‘Stand by to ease off his tow-lines, then,’ said Tom—‘now look sharp with the shiners there, my lads—ownly a guinea!’ ‘No, no!’ murmured the townspeople, ‘send for the constable—we’ll all be scalped and murdered in our beds!—no, no, for God’s sake, mister sailors!’ A grocer ran out of his door to beg the tars wouldn’t think of such a thing, and the village constable came shoving himself in with the beadle. ‘Come, come,’ said the constable, in a soothing style, while the beadle tried to look big and blustering, ‘you mustn’t do it, my good men—not on no desideration, *here*—in his majesty’s name. Take un on to the next parish—I horder all good subjects to resist me!’ ‘*What!*’ growled the foretopman, with an air of supreme disgust, ‘han’t ye no feelin’s for liberty hereaway? Parish be blowed! Bill, my lad, let go his moorings, and give the poor wretch his nat’ral freedom!’ ‘I’m right down ashamed on my country,’ said Bill. ‘Hullo, shipmates, cast off at once, an’ never mind the loss—I hasn’t slept easy myself sin’ he wor cotched!’ ‘Nor me either,’ said another; ‘but I’m feared he’ll play old Harry when he’s loose, mate.’

“I had been watching the affair all this time from inside, a good deal amused, in those days, at the trick—especially so well carried out as it was by the sailors. ‘Here, my fine fellows,’ said I at last, ‘bring him in, if you please, and let me have a look at him.’ Next minute in came the whole party, and supposing from my plain clothes I was merely some long-shore traveller, they put their savage through his dance with great vigour. ‘Wonderfully tame he’s got, your honour!’ said the topman; ‘it’s nothing to what he does if you freshens his nip.’ ‘What does he eat?’ I asked, pretending not to understand the hint. ‘Why, nought to speak on, sir,’ said he; ‘but we wonst lost a boy doorin’ the cruise, nobody know’d how—though ’twas thought he went o’board, some on us had our doubts.’ ‘Curiously tatooed, too,’ I said; ‘I should like to examine his arm.’ ‘A bit obstropolous he is, your honour, if you handles him.’ ‘Never mind,’ said I, getting up and seizing the wrist of the Andaman islander, in spite of his grins; and my suspicions were immediately fulfilled by seeing a whole range of familiar devices marked in

blue on the fellow's arm—amongst them an anchor with a heart transfixd by a harpoon, on one side the word 'Sal,' and on the other 'M. O., 1811.' 'Where did you steal this top-maul, you rascal?' said I, coolly looking in his face; while I noticed one of the men overhauling me suspiciously out of his weather-eye, and sliding to the door. 'I didn't stale it at all,' exclaimed the savage, giving his red head a scratch, 'twas Bill Green there—by japers! whack pillalew, mates, I'm done!' 'Lor! oh lor!' said Bill himself, quite crestfallen, 'if I didn't think 'twas him. We're all pressed again, mate, it's *the* leftenant.' 'Pressed, bo'?' said Tom; 'more luck, I wish we was—but they wouldn't take ye now for a bounty, you know.' Here I was fain to slack down and give a hearty laugh, particularly at recognising Bill, who had been a shipmate of Jacobs and myself in the old *Pandora*, and was nicknamed 'Green'—I believe from a small adventure of ours—so I gave the men half-a-guinea a piece to carry them on. 'Long life to your honour,' said they; and said Tom, 'If I might make so bould, sir, if your honour has got a ship yet, we all knows ye, sir, and we'd enter, if 'twas for the North Pole itself.' 'No, my lad,' said I, 'I'm sorry to say I have not got so far yet. Dykes, my man, can you tell me where your old messmate Jacobs has got to?' 'Why, sir,' replied Bill, 'I did hear he was livin' at Wapping with his wife, where we means to give him a call too, sir.' 'Good day, your honour,' said all of them, as they put on their hats to go, and covered their curiosity again with his tarpaulin. 'I'm blessed, Bill,' said Tom, 'but we'll knock off this here carrivanning now, and put before the wind for Blackwall.' 'Won't you give your savage his freedom, then?' I asked. 'Sartinly, your honour,' replied the roguish foretopman, his eye twinkling as he saw that I enjoyed the joke. 'Now, Mick, my lad, ye must run like the devil so soon as we casts ye off.' 'Oh, by the powers, thry me!' said the Irishman; 'I'm sick tired o' this cannible minnatchery. By the holy Moses, though, I must have a 'dhrop o' dew in me, or I'll fall!' Mick accordingly swigged off a noggin of gin, and declared himself ready to start. 'Head due nor'-east from the sun, Mick, and we'll pick you up in the woods, and rig you out all square again,' said the captain of the gang, before presenting himself to the mob outside. 'Now, gemmen and

ladies all,' said the sailor coolly, 'ye see we're bent on givin' this here poor unfort'nate his liberty—an' bein' tould we've got the law on our side, why, we means to do it. More by token, there's a leftenant in the Roy'l Navy aboard there, as has made up the little salvage-money, bein' poor men, orderin' us for to do it—so look out. If ye only gives him a clear offing, he'll not do no harm. Steady, Bill—slack off the star-board sheet, Jack—let go—all!' 'Oh! oh!—no! no!—for God's sake!' screamed the bystanders, as they scuttled off to both hands—'shame, shame—knock un down, catch un—tipstaff, beadle!' 'Hurrah!' roared the boys, and off went Mick O'Hooney in fine style, flourishing his top-maul, with a wild 'hullaloo,' right away over a fence, into a garden, and across a field towards the nearest wood. Everybody fell out of his way as he dashed on; then some running after him, dogs barking, and the whole of the seamen giving chase with their tarpaulins in their hands, as if to drive him far enough into the country. The whole thing was extremely rich, seen through the open air from the tavern window, where I sat laughing till the tears came into my eyes, at Jack-tars' roguishness and the stupefied Kent rustics, as they looked to each other; then at the sailors rolling away full speed along the edge of the plantation where the outlandish creature had disappeared; and, lastly, at the canvas cover which lay on the spot where he had stood. They were actually consulting how to guard against possible inroads from the savage at night, since he might be lurking near, when I mounted and rode off; I daresay even their hearing that I was a live and real lieutenant would cap the whole story.

"Croydon used to be a pretty, retired little town, you know, so quiet and old-fashioned that I enjoyed the unusual rest of it, and the very look of the canal, the market-place, the old English trees and people—by comparison with even the *Iris's* white decks, and her circumference of a prospect, so different every morning or hour of the day. My mother and my sister Jane were so kind—they petted me so, and were so happy to have me down to breakfast and out walking, even to feel the smell of my cigar—that I hardly knew where I was. I gave them an account of the places I had seen, with a few tremendous storms and a frigate-fight or two, instead of the horse-marine stories about mermaids and flying Dutchmen I

used to pass upon them when a conceited youngster. Jane, the little gipsy, would listen with her ear to a large shell, when we were upon sea matters, and shut her eyes, saying she could fancy the things so well that way. Or was it about India, there was a painted sandal-wood fan carved in open-work like the finest lace, which she would spread over her face, because the seeing through it, and its scent, made her feel as if she were in the tropics. As for my mother, good simple woman, she was always between astonishment and horror, never having believed that lieutenants would be so heartless as to masthead a midshipman for the drunkenness of a boat's crew, nor being able to understand why, with a gale brewing to seaward, a captain tried to get his ship as far as he could from land. The idea of my going to sea again never entered her head, the terrible war being over, and the rank I had gained being invariably explained to visitors as at least equal to that of a captain amongst soldiers. To the present day, this is the point with respect to seafaring matters on which my venerated and worthy parent is clearest: she will take off her gold spectacles, smoothing down her silver hair with the other hand, and lay down the law as to reform in naval titles, showing that my captain's commission puts me on a level with a military colonel. However, as usual, I got tired by little and little of this sort of thing; I fancy there's some peculiar disease gets into a sailor's brain that makes him uneasy with a firm floor and no offing beyond; certainly the country about Croydon was to my mind, at that time, the worst possible—all shut in, narrow lanes, high hedges and orchards, no sky except overhead, and no horizon. If I could only have got a hill, there would have been some relief in having a look-out from it. Money I had no want of; and as for fame or rank, I neither had the ambition, nor did I ever fancy myself intended for an admiral or a Nelson; all my wish was to be up and driving about, on account of something that was *in* me. I always enjoyed a good breeze as some do champagne; and the very perfection of glory, to my thinking, was to be the soul of a gallant ship in a regular Atlantic howler: or to play at long bowls with one's match to leeward, off the ridges of a sea, with both weather and the enemy to manage. Accordingly, I wasn't at all inclined to go jogging along in one of your easy merchantmen, where you have nothing new to find

out; and I only waited to hear, from some friends who were bestirring themselves with the Board, of a ship where there might be something to do. These were my notions in those days, before getting sobered down, which I tell you for the sake of not seeming such a fool in this said adventure.

CHAPTER III

“WELL, one evening my sister Jane and I went to a race-ball at Epsom, where, of course, we saw all the ‘beauty and fashion,’ as they say, of the country round, with plenty of the army men, who were in all their glory, with Waterloo and all that; we two or three poor nauticals being quite looked down upon in comparison, since Nelson was dead, and we had left ourselves nothing at the end to fight with. I even heard one belle ask a dragoon ‘what uniform that was—was it the horse-artillery corps?’ ‘Haw!’ said the dragoon, squinting at me through an eyeglass, and then looking with one eye at his spurs, and with the other at his partner, ‘not at all sure! I *do* think, after all, Miss——, ’tis the—the marine body—a sort of amphibious animals! They weren’t with *us*, though, you know—*couldn’t* be, indeed, though it *was* Waterloo! Haw! haw! you’ll excuse the joke, Miss——?’ ‘Ha! ha! how extremely witty, Captain——!’ said the young lady, and they whirled away towards the other end of the hall. I never felt more inclined to pull a fellow’s nose, till all of a sudden my head turned, and I forgot there was such a thing as a dragoon in the world, for I saw what I thought the loveliest young creature ever crossed my eyes, coming out of the refreshment-room with two ladies, an old and an elderly one. The first was finely dressed out, and I set her down for an aunt, she was so unlike; the other for a governess. The young lady was near sixteen to appearance, all in white. There were many beauties in the ball-room you would have called handsomer; but there was something about her altogether I could compare to nothing else but the white figure-head of the *Iris*, sliding gently along in the first curl of a breeze, with the morning sky far out on the bow—curious as you may think it, ladies! Her hair was brown, and her

complexion remarkably pale notwithstanding ; while her eyes were as dark blue, too, as—as the ocean near the line, that sometimes, in a clear calm, gets to melt till you scarcely know it from the sky. ‘Look, Edward!’ whispered my sister, ‘what a pretty creature! She can’t be English, she looks so different from everybody in the room. And such pearls in her hair! such a beautifully large diamond in that brooch! Who can she be, I wonder?’ I was so taken up, however, that I never recollected at all what Jane said till at night, in thinking the matter over; and then a whole breeze of whisperings seemingly came from every corner of the cloak-room, of ‘Who is she?’ ‘Who can she be?’ ‘Who’s her father?’ and so on, which I remembered to have heard. I only noticed at the time that somebody said she was the daughter of some rich East India nabob or other, just come home. A post-captain who was present—one of Collingwood’s flag-lieutenants—went up to the old *chaperon*, whom he seemed to know, and got into talk with her: I found afterwards she was an admiral’s widow. In a little I saw him introduced to the young lady, and ask her to dance; I fancied she hung back for a moment, but the next she bowed, gave a slight smile to the captain’s gallant sea-fashion of deep respect to the sex, and they were soon swimming away in the first set. Her dancing was more like walking with spread wings upon air than upon planks with one’s arms out, as the captain did. I’d have given my eyes, not to speak of my commission and chances to come, to have gone through that figure with *her*. When the captain had handed her to her seat again, two or three of the dragoons sauntered up to Lady Somers’s sofa: it was plain they were taken; and after conversing with the old lady, one of them, Lord Somebody, as I understood, got introduced, in his turn, to the young beauty. As may be supposed, I kept a look-out for his asking her to dance, seeing that, if she had done so with one of the embroidered crew, and their clattering gear, I’d have gone out that instant, found out the Waterloo fellow next day, and, if not shot myself, have drilled him with an anchor button for a bullet, and run off in the first craft I could get. The cool, easy, impertinent way this second man made his request, though—just as if he couldn’t be refused, and didn’t care about it—it was as different from the captain of the *Diomedé’s*

as red from blue! My heart went like the main-tack blocks thrashing when you luff too much; so you may guess what I felt to see the young lady, who was leaning back on the sofa, give her head a pettish sort of turn to the old one, without a word, as much as to say she didn't want to. 'My love!' I heard the old lady say, 'I fear you are tired! My Lord, your lordship must excuse Miss Hyde on this occasion, as she is in delicate health!' The dragoon was a polite nobleman, according to his cloth; so he kept on talking and smiling, till he could walk off without seeming as if he'd got his sabre betwixt his feet; but I fancied him a little down by the head when he did go. All the time the young beauty was sitting with her face as quiet and indifferent as may be, only there was a sparkle in her blue eyes, and in nothing else but the pearls in her hair, as she looked on at the dancing; and, to my eye, there was a touch of the rose came out on her pale cheek, clear though it was before the dragoon spoke to her. Not long after, an oldish gentleman came out with a grey-haired old general from the refreshment-room: a thin yellow-complexioned man he was, with no whiskers and bald forehead, and a bilious eye, but handsome, and his face as pompous and solemn-looking as if he'd been First Lord, or had got a whole court-martial on his shoulders for next day. I should have known him from a thousand for a man that had lived in the East, were it nothing but the quick way he looked over his shoulder for a servant or two, when he wanted his carriage called—no doubt just as one feels when he forgets he's ashore, like I did every now and then, looking up out to windward, and getting a garden-wall or a wood slap into one's eyesight, as 'twere. I laid down the old gentleman at once for this said nabob; in fact, as soon as a footman told him his carriage was waiting, he walked up to the young lady and her companions, and went off with them, a steward and a lady patroness conveying them to the break of the steps. The only notion that ran in my head, on the way home that night with my sister, was, 'By heavens! I might just as well be in love with the bit of sky at the end of the flying-jibboom!' and all the while the confounded wheels kept droning it into me, till I was as dizzy as the first time I looked over the fore-royal-yard. The whole night long I dreamt I was mad after the figurehead of the *Iris*, and asked her to dance with me, on

which she turned round with a look as cold as water, or plain 'No.' At last I caught firm hold of her and jumped overboard; and next moment we were heaving on the blue swell in sight of the black old Guinea coast—when round turned the figure and changed into Miss Hyde; and the old nabob hauled us ashore upon a beautiful island, where I woke and thought I was wanted on deck, although it was only my mother calling me.

"All I had found out about them was, that Sir Charles Hyde was the name of the East Indian, and how he was a Bengal judge newly come home; where they lived, nobody at the ball seemed to know. At home, of course, it was so absurd to think of getting acquainted with a rich Indian judge and his daughter, that I said no more of the matter; although I looked so foolish and care-about-nothing, I suppose, that my mother said to Jane she was sure I wanted to go to sea again, and even urged me to 'take a trip to the Downs, perhaps.' As for going to sea, however, I felt I could no more stir, *then*, from where I was, than with a best bower down, and all hands drunk but the captain. There was a favourite lazy spot of mine near the house, where I used to lie after dinner, and puff away amongst the grass, at the back of a high garden-wall with two doors in it, and a plank across a little brook running close under them. All round was a green paddock for cows; there was a tall tree at hand, which I climbed now and then half-mast high, to get a look down a long lane that ran level to the sky, and gave you a sharp gush of blue from the far end. Being a luxurious dog in those days, like the cloth in general when hung up ashore, I used to call it 'The Idler's Walk,' and 'The Lazy Watch,' where I did duty somewhat like the famous bo'sun that told his boy to call him every night and say the captain wanted him, when he turned over with a polite message, and no good to the old tyrant's eyes.

"Well, one afternoon I was stretched on the softest bit of this retreat, feeling unhappy all over, and trying to think of nothing in particular, as I looked at the wall and smoked my cheroot. Excuse me if I think that, so far as I remember, there is nothing so consolatory, though it can't of course cure one, as a fine Manilla for the 'green sickness,' as our foremast fellows would say. My main idea was that nothing on earth

could turn up to get me out of this scrape, but I should stick eternally, with my head sails shivering aback, or flapping in a sickening dead calm. It was a beautiful hot summer afternoon, as quiet as possible, and I was weary to death of seeing that shadow of the branch lying against the white wall, down to the key-hole of the nearest door. All of a sudden I heard the sweetest voice imaginable, coming down the garden as it were, singing a verse of a Hindostanee song I had heard the Bengal girls chant with their pitchers on their heads at the well, of an evening :

La li ta la, ta perisi,
 La na comalay ah sahm-rè,
 Madna, ca—rahm
 Ram li ta, co-ca-la lir jhi !
 La li ta la, vanga-la ta perisi.

‘Coc-coka-cokatoo!’ screamed a harsh voice, which I certainly could distinguish from the first. ‘Pretty cockatoo!’ said the other coaxingly; and the next minute the large pink-flushed bird itself popped his head over the top-stones above the door, floundering about with his throat foul of the silver chain fast to his leg, till he hung by his beak on my side of the wall, half-choked, and trying to croak out—‘Pretty—pretty cocky!’ Before I had time to think, the door opened, and, by heavens! there was my very charmer herself, with the shade of the green leaves showered over her distressed face. She had scarcely seen me before I sprang up and caught the cockatoo, which bit me like an imp incarnate, till the blood ran down my fingers as I handed it to its mistress, my heart in my mouth, and more than a quarter-deck bow in my cap. The young lady looked at me first in surprise, as may be supposed, and then, with a smile of thanks that set my brain all afloat, ‘Oh, dear me!’ exclaimed she, ‘you are hurt!’ ‘*Hurt!*’ I said, looking so bewildered, I suppose, that she couldn’t help laughing. ‘Tippoo is very stupid,’ continued she, smiling, ‘because he is out of his own country, I think. You shall have no sugar to-night, mister cockatoo, for biting your friends.’

“‘Were you—ever in India—madam?’ I stammered out. ‘Not since I was a child,’ she answered; but just then I saw the figure of the nabob sauntering down the garden, and said I had particular business and must be off. ‘You are very

busy here, sir?' said the charming young creature archly. 'You are longing till you go to sea, I daresay—like Tippoo and me.' 'You?' said I, staring at the keyhole whilst she caught my eye, and blushed a little, as I thought. 'Yes, we are going—I long to see India again, and I remember the sea, too, like a dream.'

"Oh, heavens! thought I, when I heard the old gentleman call out—'Lota! Lota, beebie-lee! Kabultah, meetoonah?'"* and away she vanished behind the door, with a smile dropped to myself. The tone of the judge's voice, and his speaking Hindoo, showed he was fond of his daughter at any rate. Off I went, too, as much confused as before, only for the new thought in my head. 'The sea, the sea!' I shouted, as soon as out of hearing, and felt the wind, as 'twere, coming from aft at last, like the first ripple. 'Yes, by George!' said I, 'outward bound for a thousand. I'll go, if it was before the mast.' All at once I remembered I didn't know the ship's name, or when. Next day, and the next again, I was skulking about my old place, but nobody appeared—not so much as a shadow inside the keyhole. At last one evening, just as I was going away, the door opened; I strolled slowly along, when, instead of the charming Lota, out came the flat brown turban of an ugly *kitmagar*, with a moustache, looking round to see who was there. 'Salaam, sah'b,' said the brown fellow, holding the door behind him with one paw. 'Burra judge sahib bhote bhote salaam send uppiser† sah'b—'ope not *dekhe* ‡ after sahib cook-maid.' 'Joot baht, hurkut-jee,§' said I, laughing. 'Sah'b been *my* coontree?' inquired the Bengalee more politely. 'Jee, yes,' I said, wishing to draw him out. 'I Inglisth can is-peek,' continued the dark footman, conceitedly; 'ver well sah'b, but one misfortune us for come i-here. Baud *carry* make—plenty too much *poork*—too much graug drink. Termeric—chili—banana not got—not coco-tree got—pah! Baud coontree, too much i-cold, sah'b?' 'Curse the rascal's impudence,' I thought, but I asked him if he wasn't going back. 'Yis, sah'b, *such baht*.|| Al-il aláh? Mohummud burra Meer-kea. Bote too much i-smell, *my* coontree.' 'When are you going?' I asked, carelessly. 'Two day this time, sah'b.' 'Can you tell me the name of the ship?' I went on. The *kitmagar* looked at

* Little girl! Do you hear, sweet one?

† Officer.

‡ Look. § 'Tis a lie, you scoundrel.

|| That is true.

me slyly, stroked his moustache, and meditated; after which he squinted at me again, and his lips opened so as to form the magic word, *Buckshish*? 'Jee,' said I, holding out a crown piece, 'the ship's name and the harbour?' 'Se,' began he; the coin touched his palm—'ring'; his fingers closed on it, and 'patahm,' dropped from his leathery lips. 'The *Seringapatam*?' I said. 'Ahn, sah'b.' 'London, eh?' I added; to which he returned another reluctant assent, as if it wasn't paid for, and I walked off. However, I had not got round the corner before I noticed the figure of the old gentleman himself looking after me from the doorway; his worthy *kitmagar* salaaming to the ground, and no doubt giving information how the 'cheep uppiser' had tried to pump him to no purpose. The nabob looked plainly as suspicious as if I had wanted to break into his house, since he held his hand over his eyes to watch me out of sight.

"At night, I told my mother and sister I should be off to London next day for sea. What betwixt their vexation at losing me, and their satisfaction to see me more cheerful, with talking over matters, we sat up half the night. I was so ashamed, though, to tell them what I intended, considering what a fool's chase it would seem to anyone but myself, that I kept all close; and, I am sorry to say, I was so full of my love-affair, with the wild adventure of it, the sea, and everything besides, as not to feel their anxiety enough. How it was to turn out I didn't know; but somehow or other I was resolved I'd contrive to make a rope if I couldn't find one; at the worst, I might carry the ship, gain over the men, or turn pirate and discover an island. Early in the morning I packed my traps, drew a cheque for my prize-money, got the coach, and bowled off for London, to knock up Bob Jacobs, my sea godfather; this being the very first step, as it seemed to me, in making the plan feasible. Rough sort of confidant as he may look, there was no man living I would have trusted before him for keeping a secret. Bob was true as the topsail sheets; and if you only gave him the course to steer, without any of the 'puzzlement,' as he called the calculating part, he would stick to it, blow high, blow low. He was just the fellow I wanted for the lee brace, as it were, to give my weather one a purchase, even if I had altogether liked the notion of setting off all alone on what I couldn't help suspecting was a sufficiently

harebrained scheme as it stood ; and, to tell the truth, it was only to a straightforward, simple-hearted tar like Jacobs that I could have plucked up courage to make it known. I knew he would enter into it like a reefer volunteering for a cutting out, and make nothing of the difficulties—especially when a love matter was at the bottom of it : the chief question was how to discover his whereabouts, as Wapping is rather a wide word. I adopted the expedient of going into all the tobaccoshops to inquire after Jacobs, knowing him to be a more than commonly hard smoker, and no great drinker ashore. I was beginning to be tired out, however, and give up the quest, when, at the corner of a lane near the docks, I caught sight of a little door adorned with what had apparently been part of a ship's figure-head—the face of a nymph or nereid, four times as large as life, with tarnished gilding, and a long wooden pipe in her mouth that had all the effect of a bowsprit, being stayed up by a piece of marline to a hook in the wall, probably in order to keep clear of people's heads. The words painted on its two head-boards, as under a ship's bow, were 'Betsy Jacobs,' and 'licensed' on the top of the door ; the window was stowed full of cakes of cavendish, twists of negrohead, and coils of pigtail ; so that, having heard my old shipmate speak of a certain Betsy, both as sweetheart and partner, I made at once pretty sure of having lighted, by chance, on his very drydock, and went in without more ado. I found nobody in the little shop, but a rough voice, as like as possible to Jacobs' own, was chanting the sea-song of 'Come, cheer up, my lads, 'tis to glory we steer,' in the back-room, in a curious sleepy kind of drone, interrupted every now and then by the suck of his pipe, and a mysterious thumping sound, which I could only account for by the supposition that the poor fellow was mangling clothes, or gone mad. I was obliged to kick on the counter with all my might, in competition, before an eye was applied from inside to the little window ; after which, as I expected, the head of Jacobs was thrust out of the door, his hair rough, three days' beard on his chin, and he in his shirt and trousers. 'Hisht !' said he, in a low voice, not seeing me distinctly for the light, 'you're not calling the watch, my lad ! Hold on a bit, and I'll serve your orders directly.' After another stave of 'Hearts of oak are our ships,' etc., in the same drawl, and a still more vigorous thumping than before, next minute out

came Bob again ; with a wonderful air of importance, though, and drawing in one hand, to my great surprise, the slack of a line of 'half-inch,' on which he gave now and then a tug and an ease off, as he came forward, like a fellow humouring a newly-hooked fish. 'Now, then, my hearty!' said he, shading his eyes with the other hand, 'bear a——' 'Why, Jacobs, old ship,' I said, 'what's this you're after? Don't you know your old apprentice, eh?'

"Jacobs looked at my cap and epaulette, and gave out his breath in a whistle, the only other sign of astonishment being that he let go his unaccountable-looking piece of cord. 'Lord bless me, Master Ned!' said he—'I axes pardon, Lieutenant Collins, your honour!' 'Glad you know me this time, Bob, my lad,' said I, looking round—'and a comfortable berth you've got of it, I daresay. But what the deuce *are* you about in there? *You* haven't a savage, *too*, like some friends of yours I fell in with a short time ago! Or perhaps a lion or a tiger, eh, Jacobs?' 'No, no, your honour—lions be blowed!' replied he, laughing, but fiddling with his hands all the while, and standing between me and the room, as if half-ashamed. 'Tis ownly the tiller-ropes of a small craft I am left in charge of, sir. But won't ye sit down, your honour, till such time as my old 'ooman comes aboard to relieve me, sir? Here's a *cheer*, and may be you'd make so free for to take a pipe of prime Americane, your honour?' 'Let's have a look into your cabin though, Bob, my man,' said I, curious to know what was the secret; when all at once a tremendous squall from within let me sufficiently into it. The old salt had been rocking the cradle, with a fine little fellow of a baby in it, and a line made fast to keep it in play when he served the shop. 'All the pitch is in the fire now, your honour,' said he, looking terribly non-plussed; 'I've broached him to, and he's all aback till his mammy gets a hold of him.' 'A good pipe the little rogue's got though,' said I; 'and a fine child he is, Jacobs—do for a bo'sun yet.' 'Why, yes, sir,' said he, rubbing his chin with a gratified smile, as the urchin kicked, threw out his arms, and roared like to break his heart; 'I'm thinking he's a sailor all over, by natur', as one may say. He don't like a calm no more nor myself; but that's the odds of being ashore, where you needs to keep swinging the hammocks by hand, instead of havin' it done for you, sir.' In the midst of the noise, however,

we were caught by the sudden appearance of Mistress Jacobs herself—a good-looking young woman, with a market-basket full of bacon and greens, and a chubby little boy holding by her apron, who came through the shop. The first thing she did was to catch up the baby out of the cradle, and begin hushing it, after one or two side-glances of reproach at her husband, who attempted to cover his disgrace by saying, ‘Betsy, my girl, where’s your manners? why don’t you off hats to the lieutenant?—it’s my wife, your honour.’ Mrs Jacobs curtsied twice very respectfully, though not particularly fond of the profession, as I found afterwards; and I soon quite gained her smiles and good graces by praising her child, with the remark that he was too pretty ever to turn out a sailor; for, sharp as mothers are to detect this sort of flattery to anybody else’s bantling, you always find it take wonderfully with respect to their own. Whenever Jacobs and I were left to ourselves, I struck at once into my scheme—the more readily for feeling I had the weather hand of him in regard of his late appearance. It was too ridiculous, the notion of one of the best foretopmen that ever passed a weather-earring staying at home to rock his wife’s cradle and attend the shop; and he was evidently aware of it as I went on. It was a little selfish, I daresay, and Mrs Jacobs would perhaps have liked me none the better for it; but I proposed to him to get a berth in the Indiaman, sail with me for Bombay, and stand by for a foul hitch in something or other. ‘Why, sir,’ said he, ‘it shan’t be said of Bob Jacobs he were ever the man to hang back where a matter was to be done that must be done. I doesn’t see the whole bearings of it as yet, but ownly you give the orders, sir, and I’ll stick to ’em.’ ‘’Tis a long stretch between this and Bombay, Jacobs,’ said I, ‘and plenty of room for chances.’ ‘Ay, ay, sir, no doubt,’ said he, ‘your honour can *talk* the length of the best bower cable.’ ‘More than that, Bob, my lad,’ said I, ‘I know these Company men; if they once get out of their regular jog, they’re as helpless as a pig adrift on a grating; and before they grow used to sailing out of convoy, with no frigates to whip them in, depend upon it Mother Carey will have to teach them a new trick or two.’ ‘Mayhap, sir,’ put in Jacobs, doubtfully, ‘the best thing ’ud be if they cast the ship away altogether, as I’ve seen done myself for the matter of an insurance. Ye know, sir, they lets it pass at

Lloyd's now the war's over, seein' it brings customers to the underwriters, if so be ownly it don't come over often for the profits. Hows'ever it needs a good seaman to choose his lee-shore well, no doubt.' 'Oh!' answered I, laughing, 'but the chances are, all hands would want to be Robinson Crusoe at once! No, no—only let's get aboard, and take things as they come.' 'What's the ship's name, sir?' inquired Jacobs, sinking his voice, and looking cautiously over his shoulder toward the door. 'The *Seringapatam*—do you know her?' I said. 'Ay, ay, sir, well enough,' said he, readily—'a lump of a ship she is, down off Blackwall in the stream, with two more—country-built, and tumbles home rather much from below the plank-sheer for a sightly craft, besides being flat in the eyes of her, and round in the counter, just where she shouldn't, sir. Them *Parchee* Bombay shipwrights *does* clap on a lot of onchristien flummeries and gilt mouldings, let alone quarter-galleries fit for the king's castle!' 'In short, she's tea-waggon all over,' said I, 'and just as slow and as leewardly, to boot, as teak can make her?' 'Her lines is not that bad, though, your honour,' continued Jacobs, 'if you just knocked off her poop—and she'd bear a deal o' beating for a sea-boat. They've got a smart young mate, too; for I seed him t'other day a-sending up the yards, and now she's as square as a frigate, all ready to drop down river.' The short and long of it was, that I arranged with my old shipmate, who was fully bent on the cruise, whether Mrs Jacobs should approve or not, that, somehow or other, we should both ship our hammocks on board of the *Seringapatam*—he before the mast, and I wherever I could get. On going to the agent's, however—which I did as soon as I could change my uniform for plain clothes—I found, to my great disappointment, from a plan of the accommodations, that not only were the whole of the poop-cabins taken, but those on the main-deck also. Most of the passengers, I ascertained, were ladies, with their children and nurses, going back to India, and raw young cadets, with a few commercial and civilian nondescripts; there were no troops or officers, and room enough, except for one gentleman having engaged the entire poop, at an immense expense, for his own use. This I, of course, supposed was the nabob, but the clerk was too close to inform me. 'You must try another ship, sir,' said he, coolly, as he shut

the book. 'Sorry for it, but we have another booked to sail in a fortnight. A1, sir; far finer vessel—couple of hundred tons larger—and sails faster.' 'You be hanged!' muttered I, walking out; and a short time after I was on board. The stewards told me as much again; but on my slipping a guinea into the fingers of one, he suddenly recollected there was a gentleman in state-room No. 14, starboard side of the main skylight, who, being alone, might perhaps be inclined to take a chum, if I dealt with him privately. 'Yankee, sir, he is,' said the steward, by way of a useful hint. However, I didn't need the warning, at sight of the individual's long nose, thin lips, and sallow jaw-bones, without a whisker on his face, and his shirt-collar turned down, as he sat overhauling his traps beside the carronade, which was tethered in the state-room, with its muzzle through the port. He looked a good deal like a jockey beside his horse; or, as a wit of a schoolboy cadet said afterwards, the Boston gentleman, calling himself Daniel C. Snout, Esquire—like Daniel praying in the lion's den, and afraid it might turn round and roar. I must say the idea didn't quite delight me, nor the sight of a fearful quantity of baggage which was stowed up against the bulk-head; but after introducing myself and objecting to the first few offers, I at last concluded a bargain with the American for a hundred guineas, provisions exclusive, which, he remarked, was 'considerable low, I prognosticate, mister!' 'However,' said he, 'I expect you're a conversationable individual a little: I allowed for that, you know, mister. One can't do much of a trade at sea—that's a fact; and I calculate we'll swap information by the way. I'm water-pruff, I tell you, as all our nation is. You'll not *settle* at Bumbay, I reckon, mister?' But though I meant to pay my new messmate in my own coin at leisure afterwards, and be as frank and open as day with him—the only way to meet a Yankee—I made off at present as fast as possible to bring my things aboard, resolving to sleep at Blackwall, and then to stow myself out of sight for sick, until there was somebody to take off the edge of his confounded talk.

"Next afternoon, accordingly, I found myself once more afloat, the Indiaman dropping down with the first breeze. The day after, she was running through the Downs with it pretty strong from north-east, a fair wind—the pilot-boat

snoring off close-hauled to windward, with a white spray over her nose ; and the three *dungaree* topsails of the *Seringapatam* lifting and swelling, as yellow as gold, over her white courses in the blue Channel haze. The breeze freshened till she rolled before it, and everything being topsyturvy on deck, the lumber in the way, the men as busy as bees setting her ship-shape—it would have been as much as a passenger's toes were worth to show them from below ; so that I was able to keep by myself, just troubling my seamanship so much as to stand clear of the work. Enjoy it I did, too ; the first sniff of the weather was almost enough to make me forget what I was there for. I was every now and then on the point of fisting a rope, and singing out to the men ; till at length I thought it more comfortable, even for me, to run up the mizzen shrouds when everybody was forward, where I stowed myself out of sight in the cross-trees.

“About dusk, while I was waiting to slip down, a stronger puff than ordinary made them clue up the mizzen-royal from deck, which I took upon myself to furl off-hand—quick enough to puzzle a couple of boys that came aloft for the purpose, especially as, in the meantime, I had got down upon the topsail-yardarm out of their notice. When they got on deck again, I heard the little fellows telling some of the men, in a terrified sort of way, how the mizzen-royal had either stowed itself, or else it was Dick Wilson's ghost, that fell off the same yard last voyage—more by token, he used always to make fast the gaskets just that fashion. At night, however, the wind having got lighter, with half moonlight, there was a muster of some passengers on deck, all sick and miserable, as they tried to keep their feet, and have the benefit of air—the Yankee being as bad as the worst. I thought it wouldn't do for me to be altogether free, and accordingly stuck fast by Mr Snout, with my head over the quarter-deck bulwarks, looking into his face, and talking away to him, asking all sorts of questions about what was good for sea-sickness, then giving a groan to prevent myself laughing, when the spray splashed up upon his ‘water-pruff’ face, he responding to it as Sancho Panza did to Don Quixote, when the one examined the other's mouth after a potion. All he could falter out was, how he wondered I could speak at all when sick. ‘Oh ! oh dear !’ said I with another howl.

‘Yes—’tis merely because I can’t *think*! And I daresay you are thinking so much you can’t *talk*—the sea is so full of meditation, as Lord Byron—oh—oh—this water will be the death of me!’ ‘I feel as if—the whole—tarnation Atlantic was—inside of my bowels!’ gasped he through his nostrils. ‘Oh!’ I could not help putting in, as the ship and Mr Snout both gave a heave up, ‘and coming out of you!’

“During all this time I had felt so sure of my ground as scarcely to trouble myself about the Bengal judge and his treasure of a daughter; only in the midst of the high spirits brought up by the breeze, I hugged myself now and then at the thought of their turning out by degrees as things got settled. Nobody would suspect the raw chap I looked, with smooth hair and a high collar, of any particular cue: I must say there was a little vanity at the bottom of it, but I kept thinking more and more how snug and quietly I’d enjoy all that went on, sailing on one tack with the passengers and the old nabob himself, and slipping off upon the other when I could come near the charming young Lota. The notion looks more like what some scamp of a reefer, cruising ashore, would have hit upon, than suits my taste nowadays; but the cockpit had put a spice of the imp in me, which I never got clear of till this very voyage, as you’ll see, if we get through the log of it.

“The first time I went down into the cuddy was that evening to tea, where all was at sixes and sevens like the decks; the lamps ill-trimmed, stewards out of the way, and a few lads trying to bear up against their stomachs by the help of brandy and biscuits. The main figure was a jolly-looking East Indian, an indigo-planter, as he turned out, with a bald forehead, a hook nose, and his gills covered with white whiskers that gave him all the cut of a cockatoo. He had his brown servant running about on every hand, and being an old stager, did his best to cheer up the rest; but nothing I saw showed the least sign of the party I looked after. I was sure I ought to have made out something of them by this time, considering the stir such a grandee as Sir Charles Hyde would cause aboard; in fact, there didn’t seem to be many passengers in her, and I began to curse the lying scoundrel of a *kitmagar* for working ‘Tom Cox’s traverse’ on me, and

myself for being a greater ass than I'd fancied. Indeed, I heard the planter mention by chance that Sir Charles Hyde, the district judge, had come home last voyage from India in this very *Seringapatam*, which, no doubt, I thought, put the Mahomedan rascal up to his trick.

"I was making up my mind to an Indian trip, and the pure pleasure of Daniel Catoson Snout, Esquire's, company for two blessed months, when all of a sudden I felt the ship bring her wind a-quarter, with a furious plunge of the Channel water along her bends, that made every landman's bowels yearn as if he felt it gurgle through him. One young fellow, more drunk than sick, gave a wild bolt right over the cuddy table, striking out with both arms and legs as if afloat, so as to sweep half of the glasses down on the floor. The planter, who was three cloths in the wind himself, looked down upon him with a comical air of pity as soon as he had got cushioned upon the wreck. 'My dear fellow,' said he, 'what do you feel—eh?' 'Feel, you—old blackguard!' stammered the griffin, 'I feel *everything*! Goes through—through my vitals as if—I was a con—founded *whale*! C—can't stand it!' 'You've drunk yourself aground, my boy!' sung out the indigo-man; 'stuck fast on the coral—eh? Never mind, we'll float you off, only don't flounder that way with your tail!—by George, you scamp, you've ruined my toe—oh dear!' I left the planter hopping round on one pin, and holding the gouty one in his hand, betwixt laughing and crying; on deck I found the floating Nab Light bearing broad on our lee-bow, with Cumberland Fort glimmering to windward, and the half-moon setting over the Isle of Wight, while we stood up for Portsmouth Harbour. The old captain, and most of the officers, were on the poop for the first time, though as stiff and uncomfortable from the sort of land-sickness and lumber-qualms that sailors feel till things are *in* their places, as the landsmen did until things were *out* of them. The skipper walked the weather side by himself and said nothing; the smart chief officer sent two men, one after another, from the wheel for 'cows' that didn't know where their tails were; and as for the middies, they seemed to know when to keep out of the way. In a little, the spars of the men-of-war at Spithead were to be seen as we rose on a sea; before the end of the first watch, we were running outside the Spit Buoy, which

was nodding and plashing with the tide in the last slant of moonshine, till at last we rounded to, and down went the anchor in five fathoms, off the Motherbank. What the Indianman wanted at Portsmouth I didn't know; but, meantime, I had given up all hopes of the nabob being in her, and the only question with me was, whether I should take the opportunity of giving all hands the slip here, even though I left my Yankee friend disconsolate, and a clear gainer by dollars beyond count.

"Early next morning there were plenty of wherries looking out for fares; so, as the Indianman was not to sail before the night-ebb, when the breeze would probably spring up fair again, I hailed one of them to go ashore at the point, for a quiet stroll over Southsea Common, where I meant to overhaul the whole bearings of the case, and think if it weren't better to go home, and wait the Admiralty's pleasure for a ship. I hadn't even seen anything of Jacobs, and the whole hotel-keeping ways of the Indianman began to disgust me, or else I should have at once decided to take the chance of seeing Lota Hyde somehow or other in India; but, again, one could scarcely endure the notion of droning on in a frigate without so much as a Brest lugger to let drive at. It was about six o'clock; the morning-gun from the guard-ship off the dock-yard came booming down through the harbour, the blue offing shone like silver, and the green tideway sparkled on every surge, up to where they were flashing and poppling on the copper of the frigates at Spithead. I noticed them crossing yards and squaring; the farthest out hove up anchor, loosed foretopsail, cast her head to starboard, and fired a gun as she stood slowly out to sea under all sail, with a light air freshening abeam. The noble look of her almost reconciled me of itself to the service, were it for the mere sake of having a share in driving such a craft between wind and water. Just then, however, an incident turned up in spite of me, which I certainly didn't expect, and which had more, even than I reckoned at the time, to do with my other adventure; seeing that it made me, both then and afterwards, do the direct opposite of what I meant to do, and both times put a new spoke in my wheel, as we say at sea here.

"I had observed a seventy-four, the *Stratton*, lying opposite the Spit Buoy, on board of which, as the waterman told me, a

court-martial had been held the day before, where they broke a first lieutenant for insulting his captain. Both belonged to one of the frigates: the captain I had seen, and heard of as the worst tyrant in the navy; his ship was called a 'perfect hell afloat'; that same week one of the boys had tried to drown himself alongside, and a corporal of marines, after coming ashore and drinking a glass with his sweetheart, had coolly walked down to the point, jumped in between two boats and the jetty, and kept himself under water till he was dead. The lieutenant had been dismissed the service, and as I recognised the name, I wondered whether it could actually be my schoolfellow, Tom Westwood, as gallant a fellow and as merry as ever broke biscuit. Two sail-boats, one from around the *Stratton's* quarter, and the other from over by Gosport, steering on the same tack for Southsea, turned my attention as I sauntered down to the beach. The bow of the nearest wherry grounded on the stones as I began to walk quicker towards the town-gates, chiefly because I was pretty ready for an early breakfast at the old Blue Posts, and also because I had a slight notion of what these gentlemen wanted on Southsea Beach at odd hours. Out they jumped, however—one man in naval undress, another a captain in full fig, the third a surgeon—coming right athwart my course to bring me to. The first I almost at once remembered for the notorious captain of the *Orestes*, or *N'Oreste*, as the midshipmen called her, from her French build and her character altogether. 'Hallo, you sir!' said the other captain, decidedly, 'you must stand still.' 'Indeed,' said I; 'and why so, if you please?' 'Since you *are* here, we don't intend allowing you to pass for some few minutes.' 'And what if I should do as I choose, sir?' I asked. 'If you stir two steps, sir, I shall shoot you,' replied the captain, who was one of the bullying school. 'Oh, very well,' I said, rather confounded by his impertinence, 'then I shall stay'; and I accordingly stood stock-still, with my arms folded, until the other boat landed a party of two. They were in plain clothes; nor did I give them any particular heed till the seconds had stationed their men, when the captain of the *Orestes* had his back to me, and his antagonist stood directly facing. As his pale resolved features came out before me with the morning sun on them, his lips together, and his nostrils large, I recognised my old friend Westwood. The captain had

broke him the day before, and now had accepted his challenge, being a known dead shot, while the lieutenant had never fired a bullet in cold blood; there was, no doubt, a settled purpose in the tyrant to crush the first man that had dared to thwart his will. Westwood's second came forward and mentioned to the other that his friend was still willing to withdraw the words spoken in first heat, and would accordingly fire in the air. 'Coward!' shouted the captain of the *Orestes* immediately, 'I shall shoot you through the heart!' 'Sir,' said I to his second, 'I *will not* look on; and if that gentleman is shot, I will be witness against you both as murderers.' I dropped down behind a stone out of the line of fire, and to keep my eyes off the devilish piece of work, though my blood boiled to knock the fellow down that I was speaking to. Another minute, and the suspense was too great for me to help looking up. Just at that moment I saw how *set* Westwood's face was; he was watching his enemy with an eye that showed to me what the other's must be—seeking for his life. The seconds gave the word to each other in the middle, and dropped two white handkerchiefs at once with their hands together; I caught the flash of Westwood's pistol, when, to my astonishment, I saw the captain of the *Orestes* next moment jerk up his arm betwixt me and the sky, fire in the air, and slowly fall back—he was dead!—shot through the heart. One glance at his face gave you a notion of the devilish meaning he had had; but what was my surprise when his second walked up to Westwood, and said to him, 'Sir, you are the murderer of Captain Duncombe—my friend fired in the air as you proposed.' 'You are mistaken, sir,' answered Westwood, coldly; 'Captain Duncombe sought my life, and I have used the privilege of self-defence.' 'The surgeon is of my opinion,' said the other; 'and I am sorry to say that we cannot allow you to depart.' 'I shall give myself up to the authorities at once,' said Westwood. 'We have only your word for that, which I must be permitted, in such a case, to doubt,' replied the captain, whose evident wish it was to detain Westwood by force or threats while he sent off his surgeon. The worst of it was, as I now found, that since the court-martial and the challenge, an Admiralty order had arrived, in consideration of several gallant acts during the war, as well as private representation, restoring him to the service; so that he had, in fact,

called out and shot his superior officer. As for the charge now brought forward, it was too absurd for any to believe it, unless from rage or prejudice ; the case was bad enough, at any rate, without it.

"In the meantime I had exchanged a word or two with Westwood's friend ; after which, lifting a second pistol which lay on the sand, I went up to the captain. 'Sir,' said I, 'you used the freedom, a little ago, of forcing me into your concerns, and I have seen the end of it. I have now got to tell you, having watched your conduct, that either you must submit to be made fast here for a bit, else, by the God that made me, I'll shoot you through the head.' The captain looked at me, his surgeon sidled up to him ; and being a man near my own size, he suddenly tried to wrench the pistol out of my hands. However, I had him the next moment under my knee, while Westwood's second secured the little surgeon, and took a few round sea-turns about his wrists and ankles with a neckerchief. My companion then gave me a hand to do the same with his superior officer—the medico all the time singing out like a bull, and the captain threatening—while the dead body lay stark and stiff behind us, the eyes wide, the head down, and the breast up, the hand clenching a pistol, just as he had fallen. Westwood stood quite unconscious of everything we did, only he seemed to be watching the knees drawn up as they stiffened, and the sand-flies gathering about the mouth. 'Shall we clap a stopper between their teeth?' said the second to me—he had been at sea, but who he was I never knew—the surgeon will be heard on the walls, he bellows so!' 'Never mind,' said I, 'we'll just drop them beyond tide-mark—the lee of the stones yonder.' In fact, from the noise the tide was making, I question if the shots could have been heard even by the watermen, who had prudently sheered out of sight round a point. I couldn't help looking, when we had done this, from the captain's body to his own frigate, as she was sluing round head on to us, at single anchor, to the turn of tide, with her buoy dancing on the brisk blue sweep of water, and her figurehead shining in the sunlight. As soon as we had covered over the corpse with tangle, Westwood started as if we had taken something away from him, or freed him of a spell. 'Westwood!' said I, laying my hand on his shoulder, 'you *must* come along with

me.' He said nothing, but followed us quietly round to the wherries, where I told the watermen that the other party had gone a different way to keep clear, and we wanted them to pull for Gosport. At Gosport we had Westwood rigged out in black clothes, his hair cropped, and whiskers shaved off—as I thought it the fittest thing for his case, and what he could best carry out, to go aboard of the Indiaman with me as if he were a missionary. Poor fellow! he didn't well know *what* he was. So, having waited till dusk, to let the watermen lose our track, and his friend having posted off for Dover, he and I both got safe over to the *Seringapatam*, where I had him stowed in the first convenient state-room I could find. I had actually forgot, through the excitement, all about having missed my first chase; from one hour to another I kept watching the tide-marks ashore, and the dog-vane on the ship's quarter, all impatience to hear the word given for 'all hands up anchor,' and hoping our worthy friends on Southsea Beach were still lying within hearing of the Channel flood. At last the order did come; round went the capstan merrily enough, till she had hove short and up with foretopsail set; the anchor was catted, and off went the lumbering old craft through the Solent about midnight, before a fine rattling breeze, in company with six or seven others, all running for the Needles. They were loosing the Indiaman's royals when I heard a gun from the guardship in harbour; and a little after up went a rocket, signalling to some frigate or other at Spithead; away they kept at it, with lights from the telegraph to her masthead, for several minutes. 'All's up!' thought I, 'and both Westwood and myself are in for it!'

"Next morning at daybreak, accordingly, no sooner did the dawn serve to show us Portland Light going out on the weather quarter, with a whole fleet of Channel craft and Mediterranean brigs about us, we surging through it as fast as the Indiaman could go—than *there* was a fine forty-four standing off and on right in our course, in fact the very identical *Orestes* herself! She picked us out in a moment—bore up, stood across our weather-bow, and hailed. 'What ship's that?' said the first luff in her mizzen rigging.

"'The *Seringapatam*, Honourable Company's ship, Captain Williamson!' sung out our first officer, with his cap off. 'Heave to, till I send a boat aboard of you,' hailed the naval

man, and there we bobbed to each other with mainyards backed. In a few minutes a master's mate with gig's crew was under our lee-quarter, and the mate came on deck. 'Sir,' said he, 'the Port Admiral will thank you to deliver these despatches for Sir Charles Hyde, who I believe is aboard.' 'Certainly, sir,' said the first officer, 'they shall be given to him in an hour's time.'

"'Good morning, and a fine voyage,' said the master's mate politely; and I took the occasion of asking if Captain Duncombe were on board the *Orestes*. 'No, sir,' answered the midshipman, 'he happens to be ashore at present.' I have seldom felt so relieved as when I saw the frigate haul round her mainyard, and go sweeping off to leeward, while we resumed our course. By noon we had sunk the land about Start Point, with a breeze which it was no use wasting at that season to take 'departures'; and as the afternoon set in hazy, we were soon out of sight of old England for good. For my part, I was bound eastward at last with a witness, and, like a young bear again, 'all my troubles before me.'

"There is two bells though," interrupted the narrator, starting. "Let us see what sort of night it is before the ladies retire."

CHAPTER IV

THE evening after that on which the commander of the *Gloucester* Indiaman introduced his adventures, nearly the same party met on the poop to hear them continued.

"Well then," began Captain Collins, leaning back against a stanchion of the quarter-rail, with folded arms, legs crossed, and his eyes fixed on the weather-leech of the mizzen-topsail to collect his thoughts; "well then, try to fancy the *Seringapatam* in chase of the *Gloucester*; and if I *do* use a few extra sea-terms, I consider the ladies good enough sailors for them already. At any rate, just throw a glance aloft now and then, and our good old lady will explain herself; to her own sex, she ought to be as good as a dictionary, with signs for the hard words!

"The second day out we had the wind more from seaward,

which broke up the haze into bales of cloud, and away they went rolling in for the Bay of Biscay ; with a longer wave and darker water, and the big old Indiaman surged over it as easily as might be, the blue breeze gushing right into her main-tack through the heave of the following seas, and the tail of the trade-wind flying high above her trucks in shreds and patches. Things got more ship-shape on deck ; anchor-flukes brought in-board on the head-rail, and cables stowed away—the very best sign you can have of being clear of the land. The first officer, as they called him, was a good-looking fellow, that thought no small-beer of himself, with his glossy blue jacket and Company's buttons, white trousers, and a gold thread round his cap ; he had it stuck askew to show how his hair was brushed ; and changed his boots every time he came on deck. Still he looked like a sailor, if but for the East-India brown on his face, and there was no mistake about his knowing how to set a sail, trim yards, or put the ship about ; so that the stiff old skipper left a great deal to him, besides trusting him for a first-rate navigator that had learned head-work at a naval school. The crew were to be seen all mustering before tea-time in the dog-watch, with their feet just seen under the foot mat of the fore-course, like actors behind a playhouse curtain—men that I warrant you had seen every country under heaven amongst them—as private as possible, and ready to enjoy their pots of tea upon the fore-castle, as well as their talk.

“However, all this was nothing to me, as I saw no sign of the passengers I had counted on. I could do little for poor Westwood but leave him to mope below, over his own thoughts.

“If the Indian judge really chanced to be on board after all, he evidently fought shy of company, and perhaps meant to have his own mess-table under the poop as long as the voyage lasted ; scarcely any of the ladies had apparently got their sea-qualms over yet, and, for all I knew, *she* might not be with him, even if he were there ; or, if she were, her father seemed quite Turk enough to keep her boxed up with jalousie-blinds, Calcutta fashion, and give her a walk in the middle watch, with the poop tabooed till morning. The jolly, red-faced indigo-planter was the only one that tried to get up anything like spirit at the table ; indeed, he would have

scraped acquaintance with me, if I had been in a mood for it; all I did was to say 'Yes' and 'No,' and to take wine with him. 'Poor fellow!' said he, turning to three or four of the cadets, that stuck by him like pilot-fish to an old shark, 'he's thinking of his mother at home, I daresay.' The fools thought this was meant for a joke, and began to laugh. 'Why, you unfledged griffins you,' said the planter, 'what d'ye see to nicker at, like so many jackals in a trap? D'ye suppose one thinks the less of a man for having a heart to be sick in, as well as a stomach—eh?' 'Oh, don't speak of it, Mr Rollock!' said one. 'Come, come, old boy,' said another, with a white moustache on his lip, 'twon't do for you to go the sentimental, you know.' 'Capsize my main-spanker, 'tis too funny, though,' put in a fellow who wore a glazed hat on deck, and put down all the ropes with numbers on paper, as soon as he had done being sick. The planter leant back in his chair, looked at them coolly, and burst out a-laughing. 'Catch me ever "going home" again,' said he. 'Of all the absurd occasions for impudence with the egg-shell on its head coming out, hang me if these fifteen thousand miles of infernal sea-water ain't the worst. India for ever!—that's the place to *try* a man. He's either sobered or gets room to work there; and just wait, my fine fellows, till I see *you* on the Custom-house *Bunda* at Bombay, or setting off up country—you're all of you the very food for *sircars* and *coolies*. That quiet lad there, now, soft as he looks'—meaning me—'I can tell by his eye he won't be long a griff—he'll do something. I tell you what, as soon as he's tasted his first mango-fish, he'll *understand* the country. Why, sir,' said he again, smacking his lips, 'tis worth the voyage of itself—you begin a new existence so to speak. I'll be bound all this lot o' water don't contain one single mango-fish. Remember, boys, I promised you all a regular blow-out of mango-fish, and *florican* with bread-sauce, whenever you can get across to Chuckbully Factory.' 'Blow, good breeze, then; blow away the main jib!' said the nautical young gentleman; 'I'll join you, old fellow!' 'Not the best way to bring it about, though,' said the indigo-planter, good-naturedly, not knowing but there *was* such a sail on the ship.

"The yellow setting sun was striking over the starboard quarter-boat, and the Bay of Biscay lay broad down to leeward

for a view—a couple of large craft, with all studding-sails set before the wind, making for land, far enough off to bring their canvas in a piece, and begin to look blue with the air—one like a milk-woman with pitchers and a hoop; the other like a girl carrying a big bucketful of water, and leaning the opposite way to steady herself. There was one far to north-east, too, no more than a white speck in the grey sky; and the land-cloud went up over it into so many sea-lions' heads, all looking out of their manes. The children clapped their hands and laughed; and the ladies talked about the vessels, and thought they saw land—Spain or the Pyrenees, perhaps. However, it wasn't long before my American friend Snout caught sight of me in the midst of his meditations, as he turned bolt round on his toes to hurry aft again. 'The fact is, mister,' said he, '*I'm* riled a little at *the* tarnation pride of you Britishers. There now,' said he, pointing at the blaze of the sun to westward, with his chin, 'there's *a* consolation. I calculate the sun's just over Noo-York, which I expect to give you old country folks considerable pain.'

"'No doubt,' said I, with a sigh; 'one can't help thinking of a banker run off with ever so much English gold.' 'You're a sensible chap, you are. It's *a* right-down asylum *for* oppressed Europains—that can't be denied.' 'And Africans, too,' I put in. 'Indy, now,' said he; 'I reckon there's a sight of dollars made in that country—you don't s'pose I'm goin' out there for *nothing*? We'll just take it out o' your hands yet, mister. I don't ought to let you into the schim till I know you better, you see; but I expect to want a sort o' company got up before we land. There's one of your nabobs now came into the ship at Possmouth, with a whole tail of niggurs dressed up——' 'And a lady with him, I think?' said I, as coolly as I could. 'I'll somehow open on that chap about British tyranny, I guess, after gettin' a little knowledge out of him. We'd just *rise* the niggurs, if they had *not* such a right-down cur'ous *mythullogy*—but I tell you now, mister, that's one of the very p'int's I expect to meet. Miss'naries won't do it so slick off in two thousand years, I kinder think, as this identical specoolation will in *ten*—besides payin' like Peruvain mines, which the miss'nary line don't. I'm a regoolar down-easter, ye see—kinder piercin' into a subject, like our nation in gin'ral—and the whull schim hangs together

a little, I calculate, mister?' 'So I should think, Mr Snout, indeed,' I said. Here the American gave another chuckle, and turned to again on his walk, double quick, till you'd have thought the whole length of the poop shook, when who should I see with the tail of my eye but my friend the *kitmagar* salaaming to Mr Snout by the break of the quarter-deck. The Yankee seemed rather taken aback at first, and didn't know what to make of him. 'S'laam sah'b,' said the dark servant with an impudent look, and loud enough for me to hear, as I stepped from aft. 'Judge sahib i-send genteeman salaam—say too much hivvy boot he get—all same as *illimphant*. S'pose master not so much loud walk *this* side?' 'Well!' broke out the American, looking at the Bengalee's flat turban and moustache, as if he were too great a curiosity to be angry with, then turning on his heel to proceed with his walk. 'Now, mister,' said he to me, 'that's what I call an incalculable impudent black; but he's the first I ever saw with hair on his lip, it's a fact.' 'Master not *mind*?' said the *kitmagar*, raising his key next time Mr Snout wheeled round. 'Judge sahib burra burra buhadoorkea!—ver' great man!' 'Low niggur!' said Mr Snout, tramping away aft; 'there's your British regoolations, I say, young man—niggurs bààing on the quarter-deck, and free-born citizens put off it!' 'Bhote khoob, mistree!' squeaked out the native again; 'burra judge sahib not to i-sleep apter he dine, eh? Veri well; I tell the sahib, passiger mistree moor stamp-i-stamp all the moor I can say!' So off he went to report in the poop-cabin. A little after up shot a head wrapped in a yellow bandana, just on the level of the poop-deck, looking through the breast-rail; and the next thing I saw was the great East-Indian himself, with a broad-flapped Manilla hat over his top-gear, and a red-flowered dressing-gown, standing beside the binnacle with Captain Williamson. 'What the deuce, Captain Williamson,' said the judge, with an angry glance up to the poop, 'cannot I close my eyelids after dinner for one instant—in my own private apartments, sir—for his hideous noise? Who the deuce is that person there—eh, eh?' 'He's an American gentleman, I believe, Sir Charles,' replied the captain. 'Believe, sir,' said the judge; 'you ought to *know* every individual, I think, Captain Williamson, whom you admitted into this vessel. I expressly stipulated for quiet,

sir—I understood that no suspicious or exceptionable persons should travel in the same conveyance with *my* suwarry. I'd have taken the whole ship, sir!' 'I've no more to do than tell him the regulations aboard, Sir Charles,' said the captain, 'and the annoyance will cease.' 'Tell him, indeed!' said the judge, a little more good-humouredly. 'Why, captain, the man looks like a sea-pirate. You should have taken only such raw griffins as that young lad on the other side. Ho, *kitmagar*!' 'Maharaj?' said the footman, bowing down to the deck. 'Slippers lao!' 'Jee khodabund,' answered the native, and immediately after he reappeared from the round-house door, with a pair of turned-up yellow slippers. 'Take them up with my salaam to that gentleman there,' said Sir Charles, in Hindoostanee, 'and ask him to use them.' 'Hullo!' sung out Mr Snout, on being hove-to by the *kitmagar*, with one hand on his breast, and the other holding the slippers, 'this won't do! You'd better not *rile* me again, you cussed niggur you. Out o' my way!' There they went at it along the poop together, Mr Snout striding right forward with his long legs, and the *kitmagar* hopping backward out of his way, as he tried to make himself understood; till, all at once, the poor darkey lost his balance at the ladder-head, and over he went with a smash fit to have broken his neck, if the captain's broad back hadn't fortunately been there to receive it. The rage of Sir Charles at this was quite beyond joking; nothing else would satisfy him but the unlucky Yankee's being shoved off the poop by main force, and taken below—the one stamping and roaring like an old buffalo, and the other testifying against all 'aristocratycal tyranny.'

"At eight bells again I found it a fine, breezy night, the two upper mates walking the weather quarter-deck in blue-water style, six steps and a look to windward, then a wheel round, and, now and then, a glance into the binnacle. I went aft and leant over the *Seringapatam's* lee quarter, looking at the white back-wash running aft from her bows, in green sparks, into the smooth alongside, and the surge coming round her counter to meet it. Everything was set aloft that could draw, even to a starboard main-topmast stunsail; the high Indiaman being lighter than if homeward-bound, and the breeze strong abeam, she had a good heel-over to port;

but she went easily through the water, and it was only at the other side you heard it rattling both ways along the bends. The shadow of her went far to leeward, except where a gleam came on the top of a wave or two between the sails and under their foot. Just below the sheer of the hull, aft, it was as dark as night, though now and then the light from a port struck on it and went in again; but every time she sank, the bight of her wake from astern swelled up away round the counter, with its black side as smooth as a looking-glass. I kept peering into it, and expecting to see my own face, while all the time I was very naturally thinking of one quite different, and felt uneasy till I should actually see her. 'Confound it,' I thought, 'were it only a house, one might walk round and round it till he found out the window.' I fancied her bewitching face through the garden-door, as clearly as if I saw it in the dark head of the swell; but I'd have given more only to hear that imp of a cockatoo scream once—whereas there was nothing but the water working up into the rudder-case; the pintles creaking, and the tiller-ropes cheeping as they traversed; and the long welter of the sea when the ship eased down, with the surgeon and his friends walking about and laughing up to windward. From that again, I ran on putting things together, till, in fact, Jacobs' notion of a shipwreck seemed by far the best. No doubt Jacobs and Westwood, with a few others, would be saved, while I didn't even object much to the old nabob himself, for respectability's sake, and to spare crape. But, by Jove, wouldn't one bring him to his bearings soon enough there? Every sailor gets hold of this notion some night-watch or other, leaning over the side, with pretty creatures aboard he can scarce speak to otherwise; and I was coiling it down so fast myself, at the moment, that I had just begun to pitch into the nabob about our all being Adam's sons and daughters, under a knot of green palm-trees, at the door of a wooden house, half thatched with leaves, when I was brought up with a round turn by seeing a light shining through the hazy bull's-eye in the deck where I stood. No doubt the sweet girl I had been thinking of was actually there, and going to bed; I stretched over the quarter, but the heavy mouldings were in the way against seeing more than the green bars of the after window—all turned edgeways to the water,

where the gallery hung out like a corner turret from the ship's side. Now and then, however, when she careened a little more than ordinary, and the smooth lee swell went heaping up opposite, I could notice the light through the venetians from the state-room come out upon the dark water in broad bright lines, like the grate across a fire, then disappearing in a ripple, till it was gone again, or somebody's shadow moved inside. It was the only lighted window in the gallery, and I looked every time it came as if I could see in; when at last, you may fancy my satisfaction, as, all of a sudden, one long slow heave over of the ship showed me the whole bright opening of the port, squared out of her shadow, where it shone upon the glassy round of the swell. 'Twas as plain as from a mirror in a closet—the lighted gallery window with its frame swung in, a bit of the deck-roof I was standing on, and two female figures at the window—mere dark shapes against the lamp. I almost started back at the notion of their seeing me, but away lengthened the light on the breast of the swell, and it sank slowly down into a black hollow, as the Indiaman eased up to windward. Minute by minute, quite breathless, did I watch for such another chance; but next time she leant over as much, the port had been closed, and all was dark; although those few moments were enough to send the heart into my mouth with sheer delight. The figure I had seen, holding with one hand by the portsill, and apparently keeping up her dress with the other, as if she were looking down steadily on the heave of the sea below—it couldn't be mistaken. The line of her head, neck, and shoulders, came out more certain than if they hadn't been filled up with nothing but a black shadow; it was just Lota Hyde's, as she sat in the ballroom amongst the crowd, I'd have bet the *Victory* to a bumboat on it; only her hair hung loose on one side, while the girl behind seemed to be dressing the other, for it was turned back, so that I saw clear past her cheek and neck to where the lamp was, and her ear gleamed to the light. For one moment nothing could be plainer than the glimpse old Davy Jones gave me by one of his tricks; but the old fellow was quite as decorous in his way as a chamber-blind, and swallowed his pretty little bit of blab as quickly as if it had been a mermaid caught at her morning toilet. Whenever I found there was to be no more of it for the night, the best thing to calm one's feelings was to light a cigar and

walk out the watch; but I took care it should rather be over the nabob's head than his daughter's, and went up to the weather side, where there was nobody else by this time, wishing her the sweetest of dreams, and not doubting I should see her next day.

"I daresay I should have walked out the first watch, and the second too, if Westwood hadn't come up beside me before he turned in.

"'Why, you look like the officer of the watch, Ned!' said my friend, after taking a glance round at the night. 'Yes—what?—a—a—I don't think so,' stammered I, not knowing what he said, or at least the meaning of it, though certainly it was not so deep. 'I hope not though, Tom!' said I again; 'tis the very thing I don't want to look like!' 'You seem bent on keeping it up, and coming the innocent, at any rate,' said he; 'I really didn't know you the first time I saw you in the cuddy.' 'Why, man, you never saw our theatricals in the dear old *Iris*, on the African station! I was our best female actor of tragedy there, and *did* Desdemona so well that the black cook, who stood for Othello, actually cried. He said, 'Nobody but 'ee dibble umself go for smudder Missee Dasdemoner!'" 'I daresay,' said Westwood; 'but what is the need for it *now*, even if *you* could serve as a blind for me?' 'My dear fellow,' said I, 'not at all—you've kept it up very well so far—just go on.' 'Keep it up, Ned?' inquired he—'what do you mean? I've done nothing except keep quiet from mere want of spirits.' 'So much the better,' I said; 'I never saw a man look more like a prophet in the wilderness; it doesn't cost you the least trouble—why you'd have done for Hamlet in the *Iris*, if for nothing else! After all, though, a missionary don't wear blue pilot cloth trousers, nor tie his neckerchief as you do, Tom. You must bend a white neckcloth to-morrow morning! I'm quite serious, Westwood, I assure you,' continued I. 'Just think of the suspicious look of two navy men being aboard an Indiaman, nobody knows how! Why, the first frigate we speak, or port we touch at, they'd hand one or both of us over at once—which I, for my part, shouldn't at all like!' 'Indeed, Collins,' said Tom, turning round, 'I really cannot understand *why* you went out in her! It distresses me to think that here you've got yourself into this scrape on my account! At least you'll put back in the first home-bound ship we——'

“‘Oh!’ exclaimed I, blushing a little in the dark though, both at Westwood’s simplicity, and my not wishing to tell him my secret yet—‘I’m tired of shore—I *want* to see India again—I’m thinking of going into the *army*!’ ‘The *army*, indeed!’ said Westwood, laughing for the first time, ‘and you still midshipman all over. No, no—that won’t do! I see your drift, you can’t deceive *me*! You’re a true friend, Ned, to stand by an old schoolmate so!’ ‘No, Tom!’ said I; ‘’tis you yourself that has too kind a heart, and more of a sailor’s, all fair and above-board, than I can manage! I *won’t* humbug *you*, at any rate—I tell you I’ve got a scheme of my own, and you’ll know more of it soon.’ Tom whistled; however I went on to tell him, ‘The long and the short of it is, Westwood, you’ll bring both of us down by the head if you don’t keep up the missionary.’ ‘Missionary!’ repeated he; ‘you don’t mean to say you and Neville intended all that long toggery you supplied my kit with, for me to sail under *missionary* colours? I tell you what, Ned, it’s not a character I like to cut jokes upon, much less to sham.’ ‘Jokes!’ said I; ‘there’s no joking about it; ’tis serious enough.’ ‘Why,’ said Westwood, ‘*now* I know the reason of a person like a clergyman sighting me through his spectacles for half an hour together, these two evenings below! This very afternoon he called me his brother, and began asking me all manner of questions, which I could no more answer than the cook’s mate.’ ‘Clergyman be hanged!’ said I, ‘you must steer clear of him, Tom—take care you don’t bowse up your jib too much within hail of him! Mind, I gave your name, both to the head-steward and the skipper, as the Reverend Mr Thomas, going back to Bombay. There was nothing else for it, Westwood,’ I said, ‘when you were beyond thinking for yourself. All you’ve got to do with that solemn dissenting chap in the spectacles is just to look as wise as possible, and let him know you belong to the *Church*. And as for shamming, you needn’t sham a bit—*take to it*, my dear fellow, if that will do you good.’ I said this in joke, but Westwood seemed to ponder on it for a minute or two. ‘Indeed, Collins,’ said he gravely, ‘I *do* think you’re right. What do we sailors do but give up everything in life for a mere schoolboy notion, and keep turning up salt water for years together like the old monks did the ground; only they grew corn and apples for their

pains, and we have nothing but ever so many dull watches and wild cruises ashore to remember! How many sailors have turned preachers and missionaries, just because something, by accident, as it were, taught them to put to account what you can't help feeling now and then in the very *look* of the sea. What does it mean in the Scriptures, Ned, about "seeing the wonders of the Lord in the deep?" As Westwood said this, both of us stopped on the taffrail, and, somehow or other, a touch of I didn't well know *what* went through me. I held my breath, with his hand on my arm, just at the sight I had seen a thousand times—the white wake running broad away astern, with a mark in the middle as if it had been torn, on to the green yeast of the waves, then right to their black crests plunging in the dark. It was midnight ahead, and the clouds risen aloft over where I had been looking half-an-hour before; but the long ragged split to westward was opened up, and a clear glaring glance of the sky, as pale as death, shot through it on the horizon. 'I can't be sorry for having gone to sea,' said Westwood again; 'but isn't it a better thing to leave home and friends, as those men do for the sake of carrying the Gospel to the heathen?' As soon as we wheeled round, with the ship before us, leaning over and mounting to the heave, and her spread of canvas looming out on the dark, my thoughts righted. 'Well,' said I, 'it may be all very well for some—everyone to his rope; but, for my part, I think if man hadn't been made for the sea, he couldn't have built a ship, and where would your missionaries be *then*? You're older than I am, Westwood, or I'd say you let some of your notions run away with you, like a Yankee ship with her short-handed crew!' 'Oh, Ned,' said he, 'of all places in the world for one's actions coming back on him the sea is the worst, especially when you're an idler, and have nothing to do but count the sails or listen to the passengers' feet on deck. These two days, now, I've thought more than I ever did in my life. I can't get that man's death out of my head; every time the sea flashes round me as I come from below, I think of him—it seems to me he is lying yet by the side of the Channel. I can't help having the notion he perhaps *fired in the air*!' 'Twas a base lie!' said I; 'if *he* weren't *there*, you wouldn't be here, I can tell you, Westwood.' 'I don't know how I shall ever drag through

this voyage,' continued he. 'If there were a French gunboat to cut out to-morrow morning, or if we were only to have a calm some day in sight of a Spanish slaver—'tis nothing but a jogging old Indiaman though! I shall never more see the flag over my head with pride—every respect I had was in the service!'

CHAPTER V

"NEXT morning was fine, and promised to be hot; the ship still with a side-wind from near south-west, which 'twas easy to see had slackened since midnight with a pour of rain, the sails being all wet, and coats hung to dry in the fore-rigging; she was going little more than five or six knots headway. The water was bluer, lifting in long waves, scarce a speck of foam except about the ship; but instead of having broke up with the sun, or sunk below the level, the long white clouds were risen high to leeward, wandering away at the top, and facing us steady below out of the sky, a pretty sure sign they had more to do. However, the Indiaman was all alive from stem to stern; decks drying as clean as a table; hens and ducks clucking in the coops at their food; pigs grunting; stewards and cabin-boys going fore and aft, below and above, and the men from aloft coming slowly down for breakfast, with an eye into the galley funnel. Most of the passengers were upon deck, in knots all along the poop-nettings, to look out for Corvo and Flores, the westernmost of the Azores, which we had passed before daybreak.

"'I say, Fawd!' said the warlike cadet with the moustache, all of a sudden yawning and stretching himself, as if he'd been struck with the thing himself, 'cussed dull this vessel already, ain't it?' 'No,' said Ford, the nautical man; 'that's because you're not interested in the ocean—the sea—as I am! You should study the *craft*, Bob, my boy! I'll teach you to go aloft. I only wish it would blow harder—not a mere capful of wind, you know, but a tempest!' 'By Jove! Fawd,' said the other, '*how* we *shall* enjoy India—even that breakfast with old Rollock! By-the-by, ain't breakfast ready yet?' These two fellows, for my part, I

took for a joint-model, just trying to hit a mid-helm betwixt them, else I couldn't have got through it; accordingly they both patronised me. 'Haw, Cawlins!' said one, nodding to me. 'Is that you, my boy?' said the other; 'now, you're a fellow *never* would make a sailor!' 'I daresay not,' I said gravely, 'if they have all to commence as horse-marines.' 'Now, such ignorance!' said Ford; 'marines don't ride horses, Collins, you fellow!—how d'you think they could be *fed* at sea, eh?' 'Well—now—that didn't occur to me!' said I, in the cadet key. 'Fawd, my boy, you know too much—you're quite a sea-cook!' 'Oh, now! But I'm afraid, Winterton, I never shall land ashore in India—I *am* tempted to go into the navy, instead.' 'I say, Mr Ford,' put in a fat unlicked cub of a tea-middy, grinning as he listened, 'I've put you up to a few *rises* aboard, but I don't think I told you we've got a dozen or so of *donkeys** below in the steerage?' 'Donkeys!—no?' said the griffin. 'Yes,' replied the midshipman; 'they kick like mad, though, if they get loose in a gale: why mine, now, would knock a hole through the side in no time—I'll show you them for a glass of grog, Mr Ford.'

"'Done!' and away they went. 'That fool, Fawd, you know, Cawlins, makes one sick with his stuff; I declare he chews little bits of tobacco in our room till he vomits as much as before,' said Winterton. 'I tell you what, Cawlins, you're a sensible man—I'll let you into a secret! What do you think—there's the deucedest pretty girl in the vessel, we've none of us seen except myself; I caught a sight of her this very mawning. She don't visit the cuddy at all; papa's proud, you pusseeve—a nabob, in short!' 'Oh dear!' said I. 'Yes, I do assure you, quite a bew-ty! What's to be done?—we absolutely must meet her, eh, Cawlins?' Here I mused a bit. 'Oh!' said I, looking up again, 'shall we send a deputation, do you think?' 'Or get up a ball, Cawlins? Hallo, what's this?' said he, leaning over the breast-rail to look at a stout lady who was lugging a chubby little boy of three or four, half dressed, up the poop-stair, while her careful husband and a couple of daughters blocked it up above. 'See, Tommy, dear!' said she, 'look at the *land*—the nice land, you know, Tommy.'

* Sea slang for sailors' chests.

‘Come away, my love,’ said her spouse, ‘else you won’t see it.’ Tommy, however, hung back manfully. ‘Tommy don’t want wook at *yand*,’ sang out he, kicking the deck; ‘it all such ’mell of a sheep, ma; me wook at ’at man wis *gate feel*. Fare other *feel*, man? Oh, fat a ugwy man!’ The honest tar at the wheel pulled up his shirt, and looked terribly cut at this plain remark on his phiz, which certainly wasn’t the most beautiful; meanwhile he had the leech of the mainto’gallant-sail shaking. ‘Mind your helm, there,’ sung out the second mate from the capstan. ‘My good man,’ said the lady, ‘will you be so kind as to show us the land?’ ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ growled he, putting up his weather spokes; ‘sorry I carn’t, ma’am—please not to speak to the man at the wheel.’ Jacobs was coiling down the ropes on a carronade close by, and stepped forward: ‘Beg your ladyship’s pardon,’ said he, ‘but if ye’ll give me charge o’ the youngster till you goes on the poop—why, I’ve got a babby at home myself.’ The stout lady handed him over, and Jacobs managed the little chap wonderfully. This was the first time Tommy had been on deck since leaving home, and he couldn’t see over the high bulwarks, so he fancied it was a house he was in. ‘Oh, suts big *tees*, man,’ shouted he, clapping his hands as soon as he noticed the sails and rigging aloft; ‘suts warge birds in a *tees*.’ ‘Ay, ay, my little man,’ answered Jacobs, ‘that’s the wonderful *tree*. Did ye ever hear Jack and the Bean-stalk, Tommy?’ ‘Oh, ’ess, to be soo, man,’ said Tommy, scornfully, as if he should think he had.

“‘Well, little un,’ said Jacobs, ‘that’s it, ye see. It grows up every night afore Jack’s door—and them’s Jack an’ his brothers a-comin’ down out on the wonderfowl country aloft, with fruits in their hands.’ The little fellow was delighted, and for going aloft at once. ‘Ye must wait a bit, Tommy, my lad, till you’re bigger,’ said Jacobs; ‘here, I’ll show you the country, though’; so he lifted the boy up to let him see the bright blue sea lying high away round the sky. In place of crying, as he would have done otherwise, Tommy stared with pleasure, and finished by vowing to get as soon big as possible, Jacobs advising him to eat always as hard as he had been doing hitherto.

“That morning the breakfast party was in high spirits; Mr Finch, the chief officer, rigged up to the nines in white

trousers and Company's jacket, laying himself out to please the young ladies, with whom he began to be a regular hero. He was as blustering as a young lion, and as salt-tongued as a Channel pilot to the men; but with the ladies, on the poop or in the cabin, he was always twisting his sea-talk into fine language, like what you see in books, as if the real thing weren't good enough. He rubbed his hands at hearing the mate on deck singing out over the skylight to trim yards, and gave a look along to the captain. 'You must understand, ladies,' said the mate, 'this is what we mariners call the "ladies' wind"! 'Oh, delightful!' 'Oh, *so* nice!' 'You sailors *are* so polite!' exclaimed the young ladies—'then does it actually *belong* to us?' 'Why it's a *Trade* wind, Miss Fortescue!' said Ford, the nautical cadet, venturing to put in a word; but the ladies paid no attention to him, and the chief mate gave him a look of contempt. 'You see, ladies, the reason is,' said the mate, in a flourishing way, 'because it's so regular, and as gentle as—as—why it wafts your bark into the region of, you see—the——' 'The "Doldrums,"' put in the third mate, who was a brinier individual by far, and a true seaman, but wished to pay his compliments, too, between his mouthfuls. 'At any rate,' Finch went on, 'it's congenial, I may say, to the feelings of the fair—you need never touch her braces from one day to another. I just wish, Miss Fortescue, you'd allow me the felicity of letting you see how to put the ship about.' 'A *soldier* might put her in stays, miss,' said the third mate again, encouragingly, 'and out of 'em again; she's a remarkably easy craft, owing to her——' 'Confound it, Mr Rickett,' said the first mate, turning round to his unlucky inferior, 'you're a sight too coarse for talking to ladies. Well the captain didn't hear you!' Rickett looked dumfounded, not knowing what was wrong; the old ladies frowned; the young ones either blushed or put their handkerchiefs to their mouths, and some took the occasion for walking off.

"The weather began to have a different turn already by the time we got up—the clouds banking to leeward, the sea dusky under them, and the air-line between rather bluish. Two or three lazy gulls in our wake began to look alive and show themselves, and a whole black shoal of porpoises went tumbling and rolling across the bows for half an hour, till

down they dived of a sudden, head-foremost, one after another in the same spot, like so many sheep through a gap.

"My gentleman-mate was to be seen everywhere about the decks, and active enough, I must say; the next minute he was amongst two or three young ladies aft, as polite as a dancing-master, showing them everything in board and out, as if nobody knew it except himself. Here a young girl, one of Master Tommy's sisters, came skipping aft, half in a fright. 'Oh, Miss Fortescue!' cried she, 'just think!—I peeped over into a nasty black hole there, with a ladder in it, and saw ever so many common sailors hung up in bags from the ceiling. Oh, what do you think, one of them actually kissed his hand to me.' 'Only one of the watch below awake, miss,' said the mate; 'impertinent swab—I only wish I knew which it was.' 'Poor fellows,' said the young ladies, 'pray don't be harsh to them; but what have they been doing?' 'Oh, nothing,' said he, with a laugh, 'but swing in their hammocks since eight bells.' 'Then are they so lazy as to dislike getting up to such delightful-looking occupations?' 'Why, ma'am,' said the mate, staring a little, 'they've been on deck last night two watches, of four hours each, I must say that for them.' 'Dear me!' broke out the ladies; and on this the chief officer took occasion to launch out again concerning 'the weary vigils,' as he called them, 'which we mariners have to keep, far distant from land, without a smile from the eyes of the fair to bless us. But, however, the very thought of it gives courage to the sailor's manly heart, to disregard the billows' fearful rage, and reef topsails in the tempest's angry height!' Thought I, 'He'd much better do it before.' However, the young ladies didn't seem to see that, evidently looking upon the mate as the very pink of seamen! and he actually set a second lower stud-sail, to show them how fast she could walk.

"'D'ye know, sir,' put in the third mate, coming from forward, 'I'm in doubt it's going to be rather a sneezer, sir, if ye look round the larboard stun-s'ls.' Sure enough, if our fine gentleman had had time, amidst his politeness, just to cast an eye beyond his spread of cloth, he would have noticed the clouds gathered all in a lump to north-eastward, one shooting into another—the breast of them lowering down to the horizon, and getting the same colour as the waves, till it

bulked out bodily in the middle. You'd have fancied the belly of it scarce half-a-mile off from the white yard-arms, and the hollow of it twenty—coming as stealthily as a ghost, that walks without feet after you, its face to yours, and the skirt of its winding-sheet in 'kingdom-come' all the while. I went up on the poop, and away behind the spanker I could see the sun gleam for one minute right on the eye of a stray cloud risen to nor'-west, with two short streaks of red, purple, and yellow together—what is called a 'wind-gall'; then it was gone. The American was talking away with jovial old Rollock and Ford, who began to look wise, and think there was mischief brewing in the weather. 'Mind your helm there, sirrah!' sung out the mate, walking aft to the wheel, as everything aloft fluttered. 'She won't lie her course, sir,' said the man. 'All aback, for'ud!' hailed the men at work on the bowsprit; and hard at it went all hands, trimming yards over and over again; the wind freshening fast, stu'n-sails flapping, booms bending, and the whole spread of canvas in a cumber, to teach the mate not to be in such a hurry with his absurd merchantman's side-wings next time. The last stu'n-sail he hauled down caught full aback before the wheel could keep her away quick enough; the sheet of it hitched foul at the boom-end, and crack through went the boom itself, with a smash that made the ladies think it a case of shipwreck commencing. The loose scud was flying fast out from behind the top of the clouds, and spreading away overhead, as if it would catch us on the other side; while the clouds themselves broke up slowly to both hands, and the north-east breeze came sweeping along right into the three topsails, the wind one way and the sea another. As she rounded away steadying before it, you felt the masts shake in her till the topsails blew out full; she gave one sudden bolt up with her stern, like an old jackass striking behind, which capsized three or four passengers in a heap, and next minute she was surging along through the wide heave of the water as gallantly as heart could wish, driving a wave under her bows that swung back under the fore-chains on both sides, with two boys running up the rigging far aloft on each mast to stow the royals. The next thing I looked at was poor Ford's nautical hat lifting alongside on the top of a wave, as if it were being handed up to him; but no sooner seen, than

it was down in the hollow a quarter of a mile off, a couple of white gulls making snatches at it and one another, and hanging over it again with a doubtful sort of scream. Still the wind was as yet nothing to speak of when once aft; the sea was getting up slowly, and the Indiaman's easy roll over it made everyone cheerful, in spite of the shifts they were put to for getting below. When the bell struck for dinner, the sun was pretty clear, away on our starboard bow; the waves to south-westward glittered as they rose; one side of the ship shone bright to the leech of the mainto'gallant-sail, and we left the second mate hauling down the jibs for want of use for them.

"The splendid pace she went at was plain, below in the cuddy, to everybody; you felt her shoving the long seas aside with the force of a thousand horses in one, then sweep they came after her, her stern lifted, she rolled round, and made a floating rush ahead. In the middle of it, something darkened the half-open skylight, where I perceived the Scotch second mate's twisted nose and red whiskers, as he squinted down with one eye aloft, and disappeared again; after which I heard them clue up to'gallant-sails. Still she was driving through it rather too bodily to let the seas rise under her; you *heard* the wind hum off the main-topsail, and sing through betwixt it and the main-course, the scud flying over the skysail-mast truck, which I could see from below. The second mate looked in once more, caught the first officer's eye with a glance aloft, and the gallant mate left attending to the ladies to go on deck. Down went the skylight frame, and somebody carefully threw a tarpaulin over it, so that there was only the light from the port windows, by which a dozen faces turned still whiter.

"The moment I shoved my head out of the booby-hatch, I saw it was like to turn out a regular gale from nor'-east. Both courses brailed close up, and blowing out like rows of big bladders; the three topsail-yards down on the caps to reef, their canvas swelling and thundering on the stays like so many mad elephants breaking loose; the wild sky ahead of us staring right through in triumph, as it were, and the wind roaring from aft in her bare rigging; while a crowd of men in each top were laying out along the foot-ropes to both yard-arms. Below, they were singing out at the reef-tackles, the

idlers tailing on behind from the cook to the cabin-boys, a mate to each gang, and the first officer, with his hands to his mouth, before the wheel, shouting, 'Bear a hand!—d' ye hear!—two reefs.' It did one's heart good, and I entered into the spirit of it, almost forgiving Finch his fine puppy lingo, when I saw him take it so coolly, standing like a seaman, and sending his bull's voice right up with the wind into the bellies of the topsails—so I e'en fell to myself, and dragged with the steward upon the mizzen reef-tackle till it was chock up. There we were, running dead before it, the huge waves swelling long and dark after us out of the mist, then the tops of them scattered into spray; the glaring white yards swayed slowly over aloft, each dotted with ten or a dozen sturdy figures, that leant over, with the reef-points in their hands, waiting till the men at the *earings* gave the word; and Jacobs' face, as he turned round to do so—hanging on heaven knows what at one of the ends—was as distinct as possible against the gray scud miles off, and sixty feet above water. A middy, without his cap, and his hair blowing out, stood holding on in the maintop to quicken them; the first mate waved his hand for the helmsman to 'luff a little.' The ship's head was rounded slowly up as she rose on a big blue swell, that caught a wild gleam on it from westward, when I happened to glance towards the wheel. I could scarcely trust my eyes—in fact it had never been less in my mind since coming aboard than at that very point—but outside one of the round-house doors, which was half open, a few feet from the bulwark I leant over—of all moments in the day, *there* stood Lota Hyde herself at last. Speak of faces!—why I hadn't even power to turn farther round, and if I was half out of breath before, what with the wind and with pulling my share, I was breathless now—all my notions of her never came up to the look of her face at that instant. She just half stopped, as it were, at sight of the state of things, her hands letting go of the large shawl, and her hair streaming from under a straw hat tied down with a ribbon—her lips parted betwixt dread and bewilderment, and her eyes wandering round till they settled to gazing straight at the scene ahead in pure delight. I actually looked away aloft from her again, to catch what it was she seemed to see that could be so beautiful!—the second reef just made fast, men crowding in to run down and hoist

away with the rest, till, as they tailed along decks, the three shortened topsails rose faster up against the scud, and their hearty roaring chorus was as loud as the gale. 'Keep her away, my lad,' said the mate, with another wave of his hand; the topsails swelled fair before it, and the Indiaman gave a plunge right through the next sea, rising easily to it, heave after heave. The setting sun struck two or three misty spokes of his wheel through a cloud, that made a big wave here and there glitter; the ship's white yards caught some of it, and a row of broad backs, with their feet stretching the foot-rope as they stowed the foresail, shone bright out, red, blue, and striped, upon the hollow of the yellow fore-topsail, in the midst of the gale; while just under the bowsprit you saw her black figure-head, with his white turban, and his hand to his breast, giving a cool salaam now and then to the spray from her bows. At that moment, though, Lota Hyde's eye was the brightest thing I could find—all the blue gone out of the waves was in it. As for her seeing myself, I hadn't had space to think of it yet, when all of a sudden I noticed her glance light for the first time, as it were, on the mate, who was standing all the while with his back to her on the same plank of the quarter-deck. 'Down main-course!' he sung out, putting one hand in his jacket-pocket; 'down both tacks—that's it, my men—down with it!'—and out it flapped, slapping fiercely as they dragged it by main force into the bulwark-cleets, till it swelled steady above the main-stay, and the old ship sprang forward faster than before, with a wild wash of the Atlantic past her sides.

"'Another hand to the wheel, here!' said the first officer. He took a look aloft, leaning to the rise of her bows, then to windward as she rolled; everything looked trim and weatherly, so he stepped to the binnacle, where the lamp was ready lighted; and it just struck me what a smart, good-looking fellow the mate was, with his sunburnt face; and when he went to work, straightforward, no notion of showing off.

"'Confound it, though,' thought I of a sudden, seeing *her* eyes fixed on him again, and then to seaward. 'Mr Macleod,' said he to the second mate, 'send below the watch, if you please. This breeze is first-rate, though!'

"When he turned round he noticed Miss Hyde, started,

and took off his cap with a fine bow. 'I beg pardon, ma'am,' said he, 'a trifle of wind we have. I hope, Miss Hyde, it hasn't troubled you in the round-house?' What Miss Hyde might have said I don't know, but her shawl caught a gust out of the spanker, though she was in the lee of the high poop; it blew over her head, and then loose—I sprang forward—but the mate had hold of it, and put it over her again. The young lady smiled politely to the mate, and gave a cold glance of surprise, as I thought, at me. I felt that moment I could have knocked the mate down and died happy. 'Why, sir,' said he, with a cool half-sneer, 'I fancied none of you gentlemen would have favoured us this capful of wind—plenty of air there is on deck, though.'

"It just flashed through my mind what sort of rig I was in—I looked over my infernal longshore toggery, and no wonder she didn't recollect me at all. 'Curse this confounded folly!' muttered I, and made a dart to run up the poop-steps, where the breeze took me slap aback, just as the judge himself opened the larboard door. 'Why, Violet,' exclaimed he, surprised at seeing his daughter, 'are you exposing yourself to this disagreeable—I declare a perfect *storm*.' 'But see, papa!' said she, taking hold of his arm, 'how changed the sea is!—and the ship!—just look where the sun was!' 'Get in—get in, do!' kept on her father; 'you can see all that again in some finer place; you should have had a servant with you, at least, Violet.' 'I shall come out oftener than I thought, papa, I can tell you!' said she, in an arch sort of way, before she disappeared.

"The mate touched his cap to the judge, who asked where the captain was. 'Gad, sir,' said the judge crossly, 'the floor resembles an earthquake—every piece of furniture swings, sir; 'tis well enough for sleeping, but my family find it impossible to dine. If this *oolta-poolta* continues in my apartments, I must speak to Captain Williamson about it. He must manage to get into some other part of the sea, where it is less rough,' saying which, he swayed himself in and shut the door.

"I still kept thinking and picturing *her* face—Lota Hyde's—when she noticed the mate. After all, any one that knew tack from bowline might reef topsails in a fair wind; but a girl like *that* would make more count of a man knowing how

to manage wind and sea than of the Duke on his horse at Waterloo beating Bonaparte; and as for talk, he would jaw away the whole voyage, no doubt, about moonlight and the ocean, and your genteel fancy mariners. 'By George, though!' thought I, 'if the mate's a better man than me, hang me—it's all right; but burn my wig if I don't go and turn a Hindoo fakeer, with my one arm stuck up in the air till I die. Go it, old lady,' said I, as I glanced over the side before going below for the night, 'roll away, only shake something or other to *do* out of the pace you're going at.'

CHAPTER VI

"THE next morning, when Westwood and I went on deck, there was still a long sea running after us. However, by noon the sun came sifting through aloft, the breeze got warm, the decks were dry as a bone, and one just saw the large dark-blue swells lift up alongside with a shower of spray, between the seams of the bulwarks. By six o'clock, again, it was got pretty dusk ahead, and I strolled forward right to the heel of the bowsprit with Westwood, looking down through her head-boards into the heap of white foam that washed up among the woodwork every time she plunged. One knot of the men were sitting with their legs over the break of the top-gallant forecastle, swinging as she rolled—laughing, roaring, and singing as loud as they could bawl, since the wind carried it all forward out of the officers' hearing. I was rather surprised to see and hear that Jacobs' friends, Bill Dykes and Tom, were there; the rogues were taking back their savage to the Andaman Isles again, I suppose.

"'Well, my lads,' said Tom, a regular sample of the man-o-war's-man, 'this is what I calls balling it off. That mate knows how to make her go, anyhow.' 'We'll soon be into tropical regents, I consider,' remarked Bill, who made a point of never using sea-phrases except ashore, when he came out double salt, to make up for his gentility afloat. 'Hum,' grumbled a big ugly fellow, the same so flattered at the wheel

by little Tommy, 'I doesn't like your fair winds. I'll tell you what, mates, we'll be havin' it puff more from east'ard ere third watch.' 'What's the odds, Harry, old ship?' said Tom, 'a fair wind still.' 'I say, my lads,' exclaimed Tom again, looking along toward the poop, 'yonder's the ould nabooob squinting out of the round-house doors!—what's he after now, I wonder?'

"On stooping down, accordingly, I could see the judge's face with the binnacle light shining on it, as he swayed to and fro in the doorway, seemingly in a passion at something or other. 'Why,' said Bill, 'I consider he can't altogether circumstand the shindy as this here roll kicks up inside of his blessed paliss.' 'Nabob, does ye call him,' said Harry, sulkily; 'I'll tell you what, mates, he ben't nothin' but a reg'lar ould tyrant. T'other mornin' there, I just chances to brush against him as I kiles up a rope; says he, "*Fellow*," an' says he to the skipper, "I'd take it kind," says he, "if ye'd horder them common sailors for to pay more contention alongside o' *my* legs, Captain Williamson." Why, do the old beggar not think as a feller ben't a *man* as well as hisself, with his *comming sailors*, an' be blowed to him.' 'Well, though, Harry, old ship,' said Tom, 'ain't that daurter of his'n a jewel! I say, mates, she's all rounded into the head, and a clear run from aft, like a corvette model. My eye, that hair of hers is worth gold; I'd go down on the deck to please her, d'ye see.' 'No doubt,' says Bill, 'she's what I call a exact sparkler.' 'Well, I doesn't know,' said Harry, 'last vy'ge but one we'd got one aboard, a'most beautifuller—half as high again, an' twice her beam—I'm not sure but *she*——' 'All my eye, messmates,' broke in Tom; 'that one were built for *stoning*, ye see, bo', like yer cargo lumpers. No, this here young gal 'minds me o' no other blessed thing but the *Nymph* corvette's figure-head—and that warn't her match, neither. She don't look down upon a sailor, I can tell ye; there, I see her t'other morning-watch a-talkin' to Jacobs yonder, as pleasant and cheery as—— Hullo, there's the captain comed out of the nabooob's cabin, and speaking with the mate by the compass—blest if they ain't a-goin' to alter her course.'

"'Send aft here to the braces!' sung out the first officer to the boatswain. 'Blow me, shipmates, that's yeer nabooob

now, I'll bet a week's grog,' growled Harry; 'ship's course as fair as a handspike through a grummit; couldn't bring the wind more aft; my eyes, the sea's comin' to be bought and sold.' Whatever it might be for, in came the starboard yard-arms till she lay over a little; down studding and topgallant-sails, as neither of them could stand it except from aft; and off went the old ship rising high athwart the seas, her head sou'-south-east, and one streak of broken yellow light, low down to westward on her lee quarter. It was beginning to blow harder, too, and by eight bells it was 'Reef topsails, single reef.' The waves played slap on her weather side, the heavy sprays came showering over her bulwarks forward, and the forecastle planks were far from being so comfortable for a snooze as the night before.

"As soon as the wheel was relieved, and the other watch below, 'the ugly man' and his companions returned. 'Mates,' said he, solemnly, planting his back against the bitts, 'I've sailed this five-and-twenty year before the mast, an' I never yet seed the likes o' *that*! Take my say for it, we're *on* a wind now, but afore next mornin' we'll be close-hauled, beating up against it.' 'Well,' said another, 'she leaks a deal in the eyes of her below; in that case, Harry, *your* watch as slings in the fore-peak 'll be all afloat by that time.' 'What day did this craft sail on, I asks?' said the sailmaker gravely. 'Why, a Thursday night, old ship,' replied several eagerly. 'No,' went on the sailmaker; 'you counts sea-fashion, ship-mates; but till ye're clear o' the pilot, ye know, it's land-fashion ye ought for to go by. 'Twas a *Friday* by that 'ere said reckoning, shipmates.' 'No! so it was though,' said the rest; 'it don't *look* well.' 'Howsomedever I'm not goin' to come for to go and be a croaker,' continued the sailmaker, in a voice like a ghost's. 'Well, luck or no luck, mates,' grumbled big Harry, 'if so be them larboard bowlines is hauled taut by the morning watch, blow me if I don't be upsides with that 'ere ould nabooob—that's all.'

"Next morning, after all, it was easy to feel the ship had really been hauled close on a wind. When we went up the weather was clearing, though with a strongish gale from eastward, a heavy sea running, on which the Indiaman strained and creaked as she rose, rolling slowly to windward with her three double-reefed topsails strained full, then pitched head

into it as a cloud of foam and spray flew over her weather-bow. It was quite early, the decks lately washed down, and the Indian judge walking the weather quarterdeck as grave and comfortable as if it was all right. The captain was with him, and two mates to leeward. 'Sail ho!' hailed a man on the foreyard. 'Whereaway?' sang out the mate of the watch. 'Broad abeam!'

"The captain went up to the poop, and I stood on the foremost carronade near the main rigging, where I could just see her now and then white against the blue haze between the hollows of the waves, as the Indiaman lifted. 'There she is!' said I, thinking it was Westwood that stopped behind me; it was the judge, however, and as soon as I got down he stepped up, holding on with one hand to a back-stay. The ship was rising after a pitch, every bulkhead and timber in her creaking, when all of a sudden I felt by my feet what all sailors feel the same way—she was coming up in the wind too fast to mount with the next wave, and a regular *comber* it was going to be. I looked to the wheel—there was big Harry himself with a grin on his face, and his eye on Sir Charles, as he coolly gave her half a weather-spoke more, and then whirled it back again to meet her. 'For heaven's sake, look out, sir!' exclaimed I. 'Why, so I do,' said the judge, rather good-naturedly. 'Zounds! what's——' You felt the whole ship stop creaking for a moment, as she hung with the last wave—'Hold on!' shouted a mid—she gave a dull quiver from stem to stern, and I fairly pulled the judge close into the bulwark, just as smash, like thunder, came a tremendous green sea over us, three in one, washing down into the lee scuppers. The old gentleman staggered up, dripping like a poodle, and unable to see—one heard the water trickling through the skylights, and stepping away downstairs like a fellow with iron heels; while there was the sailor at the wheel grinding down his spokes in right earnest, looking aloft at the shaking fore-topsail, and the Indiaman seemingly doubtful whether to fall off or broach-to. Up she rose again, however, and drove round with her Turkhead in the air, then dip through the spray as gallantly as ever.

"'Send that lubber from the wheel, Mr Macleod!' said the captain angrily, when he came down, 'he nearly broached the ship to just now!' The 'ugly man' put on a double-gloomy

face, and grumbled something about her 'steering wild'; but the knowing squint he gave Jacobs, who relieved him, was enough to show me he was one of the best helmsmen aboard. As for the judge, he hadn't the least notion that it was anything more than a natural mischance, owing to exposing himself. He eyed the bulwark as if he couldn't understand how any wave was able to rise over it, while the captain was apologising, and hoping he wouldn't be the worse. 'Eh, young gentleman!' said Sir Charles of a sudden, turning round to me, after a glance from the weather side to the lee one, 'now I observe the circumstances, the probability is I should have had myself severely injured on the opposite side there, had it not been for your presence of mind, sir—eh?' Here I made a bow, and looked as modest as I could. 'I perceive you are wet, young gentleman,' said he again; 'you'd better change your dress—eh?' 'Thank you, sir!' I said; and as he walked off quite drenched to his cabin with the captain, I heard him remark it was 'wonderfully intelligent in a mere griffin.'

"However, the wind soon got down to a fine topgallant breeze; less of a sea on, the clouds sunk in a long grey bank to leeward, and the strange sail plain abeam of us—a large ship steering seemingly more off the wind than the *Seringapatam*, with topgallant-sails set—you could just see the heads of her courses, and her black lower-yards, when both of us rose together. Our first officer was all alive at the sight; the reefs were out of our topsails already, and he soon had us ploughing along under ordinary canvas, though still hugging the wind. In a short time the stranger appeared to take the challenge, for he slanted his yards, clapped on royals and hauled down a stu'nail, heading our course, till he was one body of white cloth on the horizon. For awhile we seemed to gain on her; but after dinner, there was the other ship's hull up on our lee-bow, rising her white streak out of the water steadily, and just lifting at times on the long blue seas; she was fore-reaching on us as plain as could be. The mate gave a stamp on the deck, and kept her away a little to set a stu'nail. 'Why,' said I to Westwood, 'he'll fall to leeward of himself!' 'She's too much *by the head*, Collins,' said Westwood; 'that's it!' 'Hasn't he the sense to take the forecourse off her?' said I, 'instead of packing more on!

Why that craft weathers on us like a schooner—I wish you and I had the Indiaman for an hour or two, Tom!’

“It wasn’t an hour before we could see the very waves splashing up under her black weather-side, and over her high bows, as she slanted right through it and rose to windward again, standing up to cross our course—a fine frigate-built Indiaman, sharper stemmed than her kind in ordinary, and square in her spread; one yard-arm just looking over the other as they ranged aloft, and all signs of a weatherly craft. ‘That’s the *Duke o’ Bedford!*’ said a sailor at the braces to his companions, ‘all oak planks, and not a splinter of teak in *her!* No chance!’ Out flew the British colours from her mizzen-peak, and next the Company’s striped ensign at her fore-royal mast-head, as a signal to speak. However, the *Seringapatam* only answered by showing her colours, and held on. All of a sudden the other Indiaman was seen slowly falling off before the wind, as if in scorn at such rude manners, and sure of passing us if she chose. For a moment the red sunset glanced through betwixt all three of her masts, every rope as fine as wire! then the canvas swung broad against it, blood-red from the sun, and she showed us her quarter-gallery, with a glimpse of her stern-windows glittering—you even made out the crowd of passengers and soldiers on her poop, and a man or two going up her rigging. The sea beyond her lay as blue as blue could be, what with the crimson streak that came zigzag on both sides of her shadow, and gleamed along the smooth troughs, taking a crest or two to dance on by the way; and what with the rough of it near hand, where the tops of the dark waves ran hither and thither in broad white flakes, we surging heavily over them.

“In a few minutes more the sun was not only down, but the clouds banked up to westward of a deep purple; and almost at once you saw nothing of the other ship except when a stray streak somehow or other caught her rising, or her mast-heads came across a pale line in the clouds. The breeze got pleasanter as the night went on, and the *Seringapatam* rattled away in fine style, careening to it by herself.

“Well, you know, nothing could be better for a good understanding and high spirits amongst us than a fast course, fine

weather, and entering the tropics. As for the tropics, if you have only a roomy ship and a good run of wind, as we had, in those latitudes, everything outside of you seems almost to have double the stuff in it that air and water have in other places; while *inside* of one, again, one felt twice the life he had before, and everybody else came out *never* a good deal than on the parlour-rug at home. As the days got each hotter than the last, and the sea bluer and bluer, we began to think better of the heavy old *Seringapatam's* pace, teak though she was, and her sole good point right before the wind. Every night she lighted her binnacle sooner, till deuce the bit of twilight there was, and the dark sky came down on us like the extinguisher over a candle. However, the look of things round and aloft made full amends for it, as long as we held the "Trades"; old Neptune shifting his scenes there so quickly, that nobody missed getting weather and air, more than he could help, were it only a sight how the Indiaman got on, without trouble to any living soul save the man at the wheel, as one long, big, bright wave shoved her to another, and the slower they rose the more business she seemed to do of herself. By the time they had furbished her up at their leisure, the *Seringapatam* had a queer Eastern style, too, throughout; with her grass mattings and husky *coir* chafing-gear, the yellow varnish about her, and her three topsails of country canvas, cut narrow towards the head—bamboo stu'nsail booms, and spare bits of bamboo always ready for everything; besides the bilious-like gold-coloured patches here and there in the rest of her sails, and the outlandish figure-head, that made you sometimes think there might be twenty thousand of them under the bows, dancing away with her like Juggernaut's travelling pagoda.

"The decks were lively enough to look at; the men working quietly by twos and threes about the bulwarks all day long, and pairs of them to be made out at different points aloft, yarning away comfortably together, as the one passed the ball for the other's serving-mallet, with now a glance at the horizon, and now a grin at the passengers below, or a cautious squint at the top of the mate's cap. White awnings triced over poop and quarter-deck, the cover of the waist hammock-netting clean scrubbed, and the big shady main-course half brailed-up, rustling and bulging above the boats

and booms amidships ; every hatchway and door with a round funnel of a wind-sail swelling into it, and their bellies moving like so many boa-constrictors come down from aloft, and going in to catch cadets. You saw the bright white sky dazzling along under the awning-cheeks, that glared on it like snow ; and the open quarter-deck ports let in so many squares of shifting blue light, with a draught of air into the hot carronade muzzles, that seem to gasp for it, with their red tompions stuck out like tongues. The very look of the lifting blue water on the shady side was refreshing, and the brighter the light got, *it* grew the darker blue. You listened for every cool splash of it on the bends, and every rustle of the canvas aloft ; and instead of thinking, as the landsmen did, of green leaves and a lazy nook for shelter, why to my fancy there's a great deal more satisfaction in good *dark blue*, with a spray over the cat-head to show you're going, and with somewhat to go for ! For want of better, one would have given his ears to jump in head-foremost, and have a first-rate bathe—the very sea itself kept rising up alongside, to make an easy dive for one, and sinking into little round troughs again, where the surges would have sprinkled over your head. Now and then a bigger wave than ordinary would go swelling up, and out sprang a whole glittering shower of flying-fish, freckling the dark side with drops, and went flittering over into the next, or skimming the crests out of sight into a hollow.

“The writers and cadets were in high feather at knowing they were in the same latitude as India, and appeared in all sorts of straw hats, white trousers, and white jackets. Ford had left off talking of going aloft for awhile, to flourish about his swimming—when he looked over with the surgeon into the smooth of a hollow, and saw something big and green, like an immense cucumber, floating along within a fathom or two of the ship, deep down in the blue water. While the griffin asked what it was, a little ripple broke above, a wet black horn came right out of it, and two fiendish round eyes glared up at us ahead of it, as we leant over the quarter, set wide in a broad black snout, shaped like a gravedigger's shovel ; then it sank away into the next wave. Ford shivered, in spite of the heat. ‘The devil ?’ inquired one of the writers, coolly, to the surgeon. ‘Not just him,’ said the Scotchman ; ‘it's only the first *shark* !’

"The young ladies, in their white dresses, now made you think of angels gliding about: as to the only one I had an eye for, by this time it wasn't of not seeing her often enough I had to complain, as she seemed to delight in nothing else but being somewhere or other upon deck, first one part of the ship, then another, as if to see how different the lookout could be made, or to watch something in the waves or the horizon. Instead of sitting with a needle or a book, like the rest, with the corner of one eye toward the gentlemen, or talking and giggling away at no allowance, she would be noticing a man aloft as if she were there herself, or trying to see past a sail, as if she fancied there was something strange on the other side of it. The rest of the girls appeared shy of her at first, no doubt on account of the judge's separate quarters and his grandee style; next, they made acquaintance, she speaking and smiling just as if she had known them before; then again most of them seemingly got jealous because the cadets squinted after her, while old Rollock said Miss Hyde would be the beauty on Chowringee Course, and the first officer was eternally pointing out things to her, like a showman at a fair.

"However, she seemed not to mind it at all, either way; those that did talk to her would scarce hear her answer ere they lost her, and there she was, looking quietly down by herself into the ripples alongside; a minute after she would be half-playing with little Tommy, and making companions of Tommy's young sisters, to see the sheep, the pigs, and the cow, or feed the poultry. As for the handsome 'first officer,' when he caught occasion for his politeness, she took it graciously enough, and listened to all he said, till, of a sudden, a smile would break over her face, and she seemed to me to put him off as easy as a duchess—on the score, it might be, of the judge's looking for her off the poop, or something else of the kind. 'Twas the more curious how much at home she seemed amongst the men at work, when she chanced to go 'forward' with Tommy and his sisters, as they skipped hither and thither: the rough blue-shirted fellows took the quids out of their cheeks as soon as they saw the party coming from aft, and began to smirk, shoving the tar-buckets and ropes aside.

"One forenoon, an old lady under the poop awning, where

she and her daughter were sewing together at a bright strip of needlework, asked me to hold her woollen yarns for her as she balled them off—being the red coat for a sepoy killing a tiger, which her daughter was making in yellow. I couldn't well refuse, seeing that amongst the ladies I was reckoned a mild, quiet young man. Even in these days I must say I had a good deal of that look, and at home they used always to call me 'quiet Ned.' My mother, good soul, never would believe I broke windows, killed cats, or fought; and the mystery to her always is *why* the neighbours had a spite at me, for if I had been a wild boy, she said, or as noisy as little Brown next door, why she wouldn't have objected to my going to sea!—that noisy little Brown, by-the-by, is now a fat banker. So in I had to stick my thumbs at arms'-length, and stoop down to the old lady, the more with a will since I guessed what they were talking of.

"'Well though, Kate,' continued the old lady, winding away at the thread, 'you cannot deny her to be a charming creature, my love?' 'Oh, if you mean *pretty*!' said the girl, 'I don't *want* to deny it—not *I*, ma'am—why should I, indeed?' 'Pity she's a little light-headed,' said her mother in a musing way. '*Affected*, you mean, mother!' said Miss Fortescue, 'and haughty.' 'Do you know, Kate,' replied the old lady, sighing, 'I fear she'll soon *go* in India!' '*Go*?' said the daughter, sharply. 'Yes; she won't stand the hot season as I did—these flighty girls never do. Poor thing! she certainly hasn't *your* stamina now, my love!'

"Here Miss Fortescue bit her lip, tossed her head, and was saying that wasn't what she cared about, though in fact she looked ready to cry; when just at the moment I saw Lota Hyde herself half above the little gallery stair, gazing straight at me, for the first time, too; a curious kind of half-smile on her face, as I stood with my paws out, the old lady jerking the yarn off my wrists, and I staring right over her big bonnet at the sky astern of the awning, pretending not to listen. All at once my mouth fell, and before she could turn her face away from the funny countenance I no doubt put on, I saw her cheek rosy and her eyes sparkle with laughter, instead of seeming like one to die soon.

"For my part I couldn't stand it at all, so I just bolted sheer round and made three strides to the poop-ladder, as dignified

as was possible, with ever so many plies of red yarn foul of my wrists, and a big red ball hopping after me when I'd vanished, like a fellow running from a hot shot! I daresay they thought on the poop I'd had a stroke of the sun on my brain, but till next day I kept clear of the passengers, and took to swigging off stiff nor'-westers of grog as long as Westwood would let me.

CHAPTER VII

"NEXT evening, when the cuddy dinner was scarce over, I went up to the poop, where there was no one to be seen; the sun just setting on our starboard-quarter in a golden blaze that stretched overhead, with flakes of it melting, as 'twere, all over the sky to port, and dropping in it like threads of oil in water; the ship with a light breeze aft, and stu'nails packed large upon her, running almost due for the line. The waves to westward were like liquid light, and the eddies round our counter came glittering out, the whole spread of her mizzen and main canvas shining like gold cloth against the fore: then 'twas but the royals and sky-sails brighter than ever, as the big round sun dipped down with a red streak or two, and the red water-line, against his hot old face. Every blue surge between had a clear green edge about its crest, the hollows turning themselves inside out from deep purple into bright blue, and outside in again—and the whole rim of the sea grew out cool and clear, away from the ship's taffrail. A pair of sharp-headed dolphins that had kept alongside for the last few minutes, swimming near the surface, turned tail round the moment I put my nose over the bulwark, and shot off like two streaks of a rainbow after the flying-fish.

"I was just wondering where Lota Hyde could be this time, when on a sudden I observed little Tommy poke his curly head out of the booby-hatch, peeping cautiously round; seeing nobody, however, save the man at the wheel, who was looking over his shoulder at the sun, the small rogue made a bolt out of the companion, and scampered aft under the awning to the judge's starboard door, with nothing on but his night-shirt. There he commenced kicking and shoving with

his bare feet and arms, till the door flew open, and over went Tommy on his nose, singing out in fine style. The next thing I heard was a laugh like the sound of a silver bell; and just as the boy's sister ran up in a fright lest he had gone overboard, Violet Hyde came out leading the little chap wrapped in a long shawl that trailed astern of him, herself with a straw bonnet barely thrown upon her head. 'Tommy says you put him in bed too soon, Jane!' said she, smiling. 'Iss!' said Master Thomas, stoutly, 'go 'way, Dzane!' 'You hadn't bid me good-night—wasn't that it, Tom? But oh! *what* a sea!' exclaimed she, catching sight of it under the awning. The little fellow wanted to see it, too; so the young lady lifted him up in her arms, no small weight I daresay, and they both looked over the bulwark: the whole sky far out of the awning to westward being spotted with orange scales, turning almost scarlet, faster than the dusk from both ends could close in; the clear greenish tint of it above the openings of the canvas going up into fathomless blue overhead, the horizon purple, and one or two still black clouds tipped with vermilion against the far sky—while the Indiaman stole along, scarce plashing under her bends.

"Every now and then you heard a whizz and a flutter, as the flying-fish broke out of a bigger surge, sometimes just missing the ship's side; at last two or three fell over the mizzen chains, and pop came one all of a sudden right into the white breast of Miss Hyde's dress inside her scarf, where only the wings kept it from disappearing. She started, Jane screamed, but the little boy coolly pulled it out, commencing to overhaul it in great delight. 'Oh, fat a funny ickoo bird!' shouted he; 'it's fell down out of 'ese t'ees!' looking aloft. 'No, no,' said Miss Hyde, laughing, as she drew her shoulders together with a shiver—'birds' noses don't drop water! 'Twill die if you don't put it in again, Tommy—'tis a fish!' 'A fish!' said he, opening his eyes wider, and smacking his lips. 'Yes, Tommy eat it for my beakfast!' However, the young lady took it out of his hand, and dropped it overboard; on which the small ogre went off rather discontented, and kissed her more as a favour than otherwise. It was almost dark already, the water shining up in the ship's wake, and the stars coming out aloft; so I was left wondering at the impudence of flying-fish, and the blessings of being a fat little

imp in a frock and trousers, compared with this puzzle of a 'traverse,' betwixt *being* a third lieutenant and hailing for a 'griffin.'

"The night following, after a sultry hot day, the wind had varied a good deal, and the ship was running almost close-hauled on a warm south-easterly breeze, with somewhat of a swell in the water. Early in the first watch there was a heavy shower, after which I went on deck, leaving Westwood at his book. The half-moon was just getting down to leeward, clear of a ragged dark cloud, and a long space of faint white light spread away on the horizon, behind the sheets of the sails hauled aft; so that you just saw a sort of a glimmer under them, on the black heave of the swell between. Every time she rolled to leeward on it, a gleam of the moonshine slipped inside the shadow of her high bulwarks, from one wet carronade to another, and went glistening over the moist decks, and among the boats and booms, that looked like some big brute or other lying stretched out on his paws, till you saw the men's faces on the forecastle as if they were so many mutineers skulking in the dark before they rush aft: then up she righted again, and all was dark inboard.

"The awnings were off, and the gruff third mate creaking slowly to and fro in his soaked shoes; the judge stood talking with the captain before one of the round-house doors; directly after I noticed a young lady's figure in a white dress close by the mizzen-rigging, apparently intent on the sea to leeward. 'Well, now or never!' thought I, stepping over in the shadow of the main-sheet. I heard her draw a long breath; and then, without turning her head at the sound of my foot, 'I wonder if there is anything so strange in India,' exclaimed she; '*is* there now?' 'No, no, madam!' said I, starting, and watching as the huge cloud grew darker, with a rusty stain in it, while three or four broad-backed swells, one beyond the other, rose up black against the setting moon, as if they'd plunge right into her. Miss Hyde turned round, with one hand on the bulwark to steady herself, and half looked at me. 'I thought,' said she—'where is papa?—I thought my father——' I begged pardon for intruding, but next minute she appeared to have forgotten it, and said, in a musing sort of way, partly to herself, partly to me—'I seem to *remember* it all—as if I just saw that black wave—and—that monstrous cloud over

again! Oh! really that is the *very* same top it had *then*—see!’—‘Yes,’ said I, leaning forward, with a notion I *had* seen it before, though heaven knew when. ‘Did you ever read about Columbus and Vasco di Gama?’ asked she, though directly afterwards her features broke into a laughing smile as she caught sight of mine—at the thought, I suppose, of my ridiculous figure the last time she saw me. ‘No, never,’ said I; ‘but look to windward, ma’am; ’tis coming on a squall again. For heaven’s sake, Miss Hyde, go in! We’re to have another shower, and that pretty thick. I wonder the mate don’t stow the royals.’ ‘What do you mean?’ said she, turning. ‘Why are you alarmed, sir? I see nothing particular.’ The sea was coming over, in a smooth round-backed swell, out of a dirty, thick jumble of a sky, with a pitch-black line behind—what Ford would have called ‘wild’ by daylight; but the young lady’s eye naturally saw no more in it than a dark night.

“Here the judge came over from the binnacle, giving me a nod, as much as to say he recollected me. ‘I am afraid, sir,’ said I, ‘if you don’t make haste, you’ll get wet.’ ‘How!’ said Sir Charles, ‘tis an exceedingly pleasant night, I think, after such a very hot day. They don’t know how to cool rooms here—this perpetual wood retains heat till midnight, sir! That detestable pitch precludes walking—the sea absolutely glares like tin. *Why* do you suppose so now—eh, young gentleman?’ said he again, turning back, all of a sudden, with his daughter on his arm.

“‘Why—why—why, Sir Charles,’ said I, hesitating betwixt sham innocence and scarce knowing what reason to give; ‘why, I just think—that is to say, it’s my feeling, you see.’ ‘Ah, ah, I *do* see,’ replied the judge, good-humouredly; ‘but you shouldn’t ape the sailor, my good fellow, as I fancy you do a little. I don’t particularly admire the class, but they always have grounds for what they say in their profession, frequently even acute. At your aunt’s, Lady Somers’s now, Violet, who was naturally so surrounded by naval officers, what I had to object to was, not their want of intelligence, but their forwardness. Eh—eh! who—what is *that*?’ exclaimed he suddenly, looking straight up into the dark, as five or six large drops fell on his face out of it. All at once you heard a long sigh, as it were, in the canvas aloft, a clap

like two or three carronades fired off, as all the sails together went into the masts—then a hum in the air far and near—and whish! rush! came the rain in sheets and bucketfuls off the edge of a cloud over our very heads, plashing and washing about the deck with coils of rope; ship rolling without a breath of wind in her sails; sails flapping out and in; the rain pouring down ten times faster than the scupper-holes would let it out, and smoking grey in the dark hollow of the swells, that sank under the force of it.

“The first officer came on deck, roaring in the hubbub to clue up and furl the royals before the wind came again. It got pitch-dark, you couldn’t see your hand before you, and we had all lost mark of each other, as the men came shoving in between us. However, I knew whereabouts Miss Hyde was, so I felt along the larboard rigging till I found a back-stay clasped in her hands, and the soaked sleeve of her muslin dress, while she leant back on a carronade, to keep from being jerked down in the water that washed up over her feet with every roll, full of ropes and a capstan bar or two. Without saying a word, I took up Lota in my arms, and carried her aft in spite of the roll and confusion, steering for the glimmer of the binnacle, till I got her inside one of their own cabins, where there was a lamp swinging about, and laid her on a sofa. I felt somehow or other, as I went, that the sweet creature hadn’t fainted, though all the while as still as death; accordingly I made off again at once to find the judge, who, no doubt, was calling for his daughter, with a poor chance of being heard.

“In a minute or two more the rain was over; it was light enough to make out the horizon, as the belt of foam came broadening out of it; the ship gave two or three wild bounds, the wheel jolting and creaking; up swelled the black waves again over one side, the topsails flapped full as the squall rushed roaring into them, and away she rose; then tore into it like a scared horse, shaking her head and throwing the snow-white foam into her fore-chains. ’Twas as much as three men could do to grind down her wheel, leaning and grinning to it; you saw just the Indianaman herself, scarce so far forward as the booms, and the broad swell mounting with her out of the dark, as she slowly squared yards before it, taking in to’-gallantsails while she did so with her topsail-yards lowered on the caps. However, the look of it was worse than its force,

else the swell wouldn't have risen so fast, as every sailor knew; and by two bells of the mid-watch she was bowling under all, as easy as before, the mate of the watch setting a stunsail.

"When I went down, shaking myself like a Newfoundland, Westwood was swinging in his cot with a book turned to the lamp, reading *Don Quixote* in Spanish. 'Bless me, Ned!' said he, 'you seem to like it! paying fair and weathering it too!' 'Only a little adventure, Westwood!' said I, laughing. 'Why, here have I been enjoying better adventures than we seem likely to have,' said he, 'without stirring a hand, except for the wild swings you gave me from deck. Here's *Don Quixote*——' 'Don Quixote be hanged!' said I: 'I'd rather wear ship in a gale, myself, than all the humbug that never happened—out of an old play-book. What's the use of *thinking* you see service, when you don't? After all, you couldn't *expect* much till we've crossed the Line—nothing like the tropics, or the Cape, for thickening a plot, Tom. Then there's the Mozambique, you know!' 'Well, we'll see,' said Westwood, lazily, and half asleep.

"The whole next day would have been weary enough in itself, as not a single glimpse of the fair Lota could I catch; and the weather, between the little puffs of air and squalls we had, was fit to have melted poor Ford to the bone, but for the rain. However, that day was sufficient, by fits and starts, to bring us up to the Line; and before crossing it, which we did by six o'clock in one of the black squalls, half of the passengers had been pretty well ducked by Neptune and his gang besides.

"Rare fun we had of it for three or four hours on end; the cadets and writers showing fight in a body, the Yankee being regularly keelhaunched, tarred, and feathered, though I believe he had crossed the Line twice by land; while the Scotch surgeon was found out, in spite his caution, never to have been lower than the West Indies—so he got double ration. A word to Jacobs took Westwood scot-free; but, for my own part, wishing of course to blind the officers, I let the men stick the tar-brush in my mouth the first word I spoke, and was shaved like the mischief, not to speak of plumping afterwards behind the studding-sail curtain into three feet water, where I absolutely saved Ford from drowning, he being as sick as a dog.

"Late at night the breeze held and freshened, and, being Saturday night, the gentlemen in the cuddy kept it uproariously after their troubles; drinking and singing songs—Tom Little's and your sentimental affairs; till, being a bit flushed myself, I was on the point of giving them one of Dibdin's, when I thought better of it, and went on deck instead. The mate was there, however, and his red-whiskered Scotch sub with the twisted snout, leaning on the capstan with their noses together. The night was dark, and the ship made a good noise through the water; so 'Hang it!' thought I, 'somehow or other I'll have out a stave of "Black-eyed Susan" at the top of my pipe, though overboard I go for it.

"There was an old square topsail-yard slung alongside to larboard, as far as the quarter-boat, and I went up to the poop to get over and sit on it; especially when I found Ford's friend the fat midshipman was in the boat itself, 'caulking'* his watch out, as he did every night in a fresh place.

"I was no sooner there again, than I saw a light in the aftermost gallery window, and took it in my head if I sung *there*, why, in place of being afraid there was someone under her casement, that and the wind and water together would put her to sleep, if she was the worse of last night—in fact, I may say I was a little '*slewed*'† at the time. How to get there, though, was the matter, it being rather a nice practice to sling over an Indiaman's quarter-gallery, bulging out from her steep counter; accordingly, first I took the end of coil round the mizzen-shrouds, and made a bowline-knot to creep down the stern-mouldings with, and then swing free by help of a guide-line to boot. Just before letting go of the taffrail, another fancy struck me, to hitch the guide-line to the trigger of the life-buoy that hung ready for use; not that I'd the notion of saving myself if I went overboard, but just because of the good joke of a fellow slipping his own life-buoy, and then cruising away, with a light at his mast-head, back to the Line.

"'Twas curious, but when I was 'two or three sheets in the wind,' far from growing stupid, I used always to get a sort of cunning that would have made me try and cheat a

* Sleeping on deck.

† Anglicé, *not* sober.

purser; so away I lowered myself till the rope was taut, when I slipped easy enough round the counter, below the window. Every time she rolled, out I swung, and in again, till I steadied with my feet, slacking off the other line from one hand. Then I began to give voice like old Boreas himself, with a sort of a notion, at each shove I got, how I was rocking the Indiaman like a big cradle, as Jacobs did his baby. All at once I felt the rope was *giving* off the belaying-pin, till I came down with a jolt under the window below; only singing the louder, as it was half open, and I could just look in. With every wash of the waves the water, a couple of fathoms under my feet, blazed up like fire, and the wake ran boiling out from the black stern by the rudder, like the iron out of a furnace; now and then there came a sulky flare of dumb lightning to leeward, and showed the black swell out of the dark for miles.

"I fancied I didn't care for the water, but I began to think 'twas rather uncomfortable the notion of sousing into such an infernally flame-looking stream; I was actually in a fright at being boiled, and not able to swim. So I dropped chorus to haul myself up, when of a sudden, by the lamp inside the state-room, I saw Winterton and Ford come reeling in, one after the other, as drunk as lords. Winterton swayed about quietly on his legs for a minute, and then looked gravely at Ford, as if he'd got a dreadful secret to make known.

"'Ford!' said he. 'Ay,' said Ford, feeling to haul off his trousers—'ay—avast you—blub-lub-lubber!' 'I say, Ford!' said the cadet again, in a melancholy way, fit to melt a marling-spike, and then fell to cry—Ford all the time pulling off his trousers, with a cigar in his mouth, till he got on a chest, and contrived to flounder into his cot with his coat on. After that he stretched over to put the lamp out, carefully enough, but he let fall his cigar, and one leg of his nankeen trousers hung out of the cot, just scraping the deck every time he swung. I watched, accordingly, holding on by the sill, till I saw a spark catch in the stuff, and there it was, swinging slowly away in the dark, with a fiery ring creeping round the leg of the trousers, ready to blow into a flame as soon as it had a clear swing. No doubt the fool would come down safe enough himself with his cot; but I knew Winterton kept

powder in the cabin sufficient to blow up the deck above, where that sweet girl was sleeping at the moment. 'Confound it,' I thought, quite cooled by the sight, 'the sooner I get on deck the better.'

"However, you may fancy my thoughts when I heard men at the taffrail, hauling on the spanker-boom guys; so I held on till they'd go forward again; suddenly the mate's voice sung out to know 'what lubber had belayed the slack of a topsail clueline *here?*' Down I went with the word, as the rope was thrown off, with just time to save myself by a clutch of the port-sill at arm's-length—where, heaven knew, I couldn't keep long. The mate looked over and caught sight of my face, by a flicker of the summer lightning, as I was slipping down: I gave him one curse as loud as I could hail, and let go the moulding. 'Man overboard,' shouted he, and the men after him; however, I wasn't altogether overboard yet, for I felt the other part of the rope bring me up with a jerk and a swing right under the quarter-boat, where I clung like a cat.

"How to get on deck again without being seen was the question, and anxious enough I was at thought of the burning train inside, when out jumped someone over my head; I heard a splash in the water, and saw a fellow's face go sinking into the bright wake astern, while the boat itself was coming down over me from the davits. I still had the guide-line from the life-buoy round my wrist, and one moment's thought was enough to make me give it a furious tug, when away I sprang clear into the eddies. The first thing I saw at coming up was the ship's lighted stern-windows driving to leeward, then the life-buoy flaring and dipping on a swell, and a bare head, with two hands, sinking a few feet off. I made for him at once, and held him up by the hair as I struck out for the buoy. A couple of minutes after, the men in the boat had hold of us and it; the ship came sheering round to the wind, and we were very shortly on board again.

"'Confound it, Simm, what took you overboard, man?' asked the mid in the boat at his dripping messmate, the fat reefer. 'Oh, bother!' said he, 'if you must know—why, I mistook the quarter-boats; I thought 'twas the *other* I was in when you kicked up that shindy. Now I remember, though, there was too much *rain* in it for comfort.' 'Well, youngster,'

said Tom, the man-o'-war's-man, 'this here gentleman saved your life, anyhow!' 'Why, mate,' whispered Bill, 'tis the wery same greenhorn we puckalowed so to-day. Didn't he jump sharp over, too?' 'Pull! for your lives, my lads!' said I, looking up at Ford's window; and the moment we got on deck, below I ran into the state-room, and cut Ford down by the heels, with the tinder hanging from him, and one leg of his trousers half gone. As for the poor reefer, a pretty blowing up he got; the men swore I had jumped overboard after him, and the mate would have it that, instead of sleeping, he wanted to get into the judge's cabins; especially when next day Sir Charles was in a rage at his daughter being disturbed by some sailor or other singing outside.

CHAPTER VIII

"YOU must surely be tired by this time, ma'am, of this long-winded yarn of mine?" said the commander of the *Gloucester* to the elder of his fair listeners, next evening they met with the evident expectation of hearing further; "but after all, this voyage must be dull work for you at present, so I daresay you are amused with anything by way of a change.

"Well, one morning, when Westwood and I went on deck, it was a stark staring calm; as dead as a mill-pond, save for the long winding heave that seemed to come miles up out of the stale blue water, and get tired with the journey—from the horizon to us in one lazy coil, and on every side, just serving to jerk the wheel a spoke back and forward, with nobody at it. The very bits of pumpkin-paring and fat which the cook had thrown overboard the night before lay still alongside, with an oily track oozing round about them from the 'slush'*—the sails hanging from the yards, up and down, like clothes on a screen—and when you looked over the side away from the sun, you saw your own face, like a fellow's that had been long drowned, peering back at you, as it were, round the keel—in fact, there you scarce knew where the water *was*.

"Somehow or other the ship kept sheering round, by little and little, till, although one had chosen a shady spot, all of a

* Cook's grease.

sudden the blazing sun came right into his eyes ; or the single streak of white cloud lying behind you, to starboard, a while after stuck itself before your face from the very opposite quarter—you fancying, too, you had your eye the whole time on the same bit of water. Being lost in a wood or a fog was nothing to it, especially with the sun at noon drawn up right overhead, so that you couldn't look aloft, and staring down into the sea out of a pool of bright light ; 'like one tremendously keen little eye,' as some of the passengers said, 'examining a big blind one.' 'Why,' put in one of the writers, 'I fear he wants to take the *mote* out of his brother's eye—this vessel, that is to say !' 'Hang it, I hope not !' said Winterton, rather alarmed. 'He promises well to do it, then,' said another young civilian, 'but I wish he'd take the *beam* out of his own first, ha, Smythe ?' However, few men have the spirit to laugh at little in a calm near the Line, so Smythe gave no more than a sickly grin, while Westwood looked the clergyman very properly.

"Both passengers and crew, all of us that could swim, gave wistful looks now and then alongside at the water, hot as it seemed, for a bathe ; just floating up, as it were, with the mere huge size of it, under a dazzle of light, and so blue and smooth you couldn't see a hair's-breadth below ; while, a bit off, the face of it and the very air appeared to dance and quiver like little streams of glass. However, all thoughts of bathing were put out of your head when you saw the black three-cornered affair, with a rake aft, somewhat like the end of a scythe, that went steering slowly round us ; then cruising hither and thither, till its infernal horn was as dry as the deck ; and at times driving straight off, as if it ran in a groove through the level surface ; when back again it came from the other side, creeping lazily towards us, till it sank with a light *tip*, and a circle or two on the blue water. The hook and chain were hanging up and down over the taffrail, with the piece of rank pork looking green in the shadow near the rudder, where you read the white figures of her draught as plain as in dock ; but the shark, a fifteen-feet customer, if he was an inch, was too knowing to have touched it.

"'Pity he's gone, Collins,' said Ford to me, after we had watched him at last out of sight ; 'wasn't there any plan of catching him, I wonder ! Now we shall have a bathe though,

at any rate.' 'Gone?' said I, 'he won't leave us in a hurry, if we don't leave *him*!' 'Poh, man!' said Ford, 'I tell you he's tired out and gone away!' Five minutes after Ford was leaning over the quarter and wiping his face, while he fanned himself with his straw hat, which fell out of his hand into the water. He had got over into the mizzen-chains to throw a line round it, when he gave a loud shriek, and jumped in-board again. Two or three fathoms of green came up from the keel, balancing on a pair of broad fins under Ford's hat, and a big round snout touched it; then a dozen feet of white belly gleamed in the water, the hat gave a gulp as it was drawn down, and a few small air-bells rose to the top. 'He prefers some flavours to others, you see, Ford,' said I. 'Tis the second hat I've seen you lose: I hope your head won't be in the *third*; but you mariners, you see——' However, Ford had bolted to his cabin.

"On turning round I perceived Miss Hyde, with the general's lady, under the awning on the other side, where the old lady leant against a cushion, with her hands crossed and her bonnet strings loose—though a strapping raw-boned Irish-woman she was—and kept Miss Hyde's maid fanning her from behind with a large feather *punkah*. The old lady had started at Ford's cry, and gave a look round at me, half fierce and half orderly, as if she expected to know what was the matter at once. 'Only my friend lost his hat, ma'am,' said I, stepping forward. 'These cadets are so 'tagious, my dear!' said she to the young lady, falling back again without the least more notice of me. 'They plague the life of me, but the brigadier can't drill them as he would if this were a troopship—I wish he could, for the sake of the profession!—now, my dear, *you* kape out of the s-hun!' However, I stuck where I was, fancying I caught the slightest bit of an arch twinkle in the corner of the young lady's eye, though she didn't look at me. 'Keep going, can't ye!' said the old lady crossly to the maid. 'No, ma'am, indeed!' said the girl, glancing over to her young mistress, 'I'm ready to drop!' 'Send up papa's *kitmagar*, then, Wilkins,' said Miss Hyde; and the girl went off toward the gallery stair, muttering she 'hoped she didn't come—here to be—made a black Indian slave of—at least to a old'—the remainder being lost in the stair.

"As I leant on the rail-netting, behind the old lady, I happened to tread on her fat pug-dog's tail, whereupon the ugly brute made its teeth meet, without further notice, in the small of my leg, after which it gave a yelp, and ran beneath the chairs. 'What's that, Die?' exclaimed its mistress; 'good heavens! is that same griffin here *yet*, my dear! Hadn't he ayven the spirit to take a hint?—I say, was it *you* hurt Dianny, young man?' 'Oh dear no, ma'am, not for the world!' said I, looking at my trousers, hard as the thing was to stand, but thinking to smooth her over, though I wasn't quite up to the old Irishwoman it turned out. 'Ha! ha! so she bit you?' said she, with a flash of her hawk's eye, and leaning back again coolly. 'If he'd only kicked poor Die for it under my chair now, I'd have forgiven him; but he hadn't ayven the heart at the time to drop her a curse—and *I* thinking all the while, too, by the luke of his eye he was from the County Clare! My heart warms to the County Clare always, because, although I'm not Irish myself, you know, I'd once a schoolfellow was born in it—without counting all my relations! Oh, the smooth spalpeen!' continued she, harder than before, glancing at me as I looked all abroad from one to the other; 'listen, niver you let that fellow spake to you, my dear! he's too——' But here I walked quietly off to put the poop's length betwixt me and the talking old vixen, cursing her and her dog both, quite enough to have pleased her Irish fancy.

"On the quarter-deck, the judge and the general seemed really to enjoy the heat and quiet, sitting with their feet up before the round-house, and smoking their long red twisted hookahs, while they watched the wreaths of smoke go whirling straight up from the bowls to the awning, and listened to the faint bubble of it through the water in the bottles, just dropping a word now and then to each other. A tall, thin 'native' servant with long sooty hair hanging from his snow-white turban, stood behind the judge's chair, bolt upright, with his arms folded, and twice as solemn as Sir Charles himself; you saw a stern-window shining far abaft, through one of the round-house doors, and the fat old fellow of a *consumah** busy laying the cloth for tiffin, while the sole breath of air there was came out of there-away.

"Suddenly eight bells struck, and everyone seemed glad

* East Indian steward.

of something new; the judge's *consumah* came out salaaming to say tiffin was ready; the cuddy passengers went below for wine-and-water and biscuit; and the men were at dinner. There being nothing to take care of on deck, and the heat of course getting greater, not a soul stayed up but myself; but I preferred at the moment lighting a cheroot, and going up aft to see clear of the awnings. The cockatoo had been left on the poop-rail, with its silver chain hitched round one of the mizzen back-stays, where it shifted from one leg to the other, hooked itself up the back-stay as far as it could go, then hurried down again, and mused a bit, as wise as Solomon—then screamed out at the top of its voice—‘Tip—tip—pr-r-retty cacka—tip-poo—cok-ka—whee-yew-ew-ew!’ finishing by a whistle of triumph fit to have split one’s ears, or brought a gale of wind—though not on account of skill in its books, at any rate. Again it took to swinging quietly head-down, at furious rate, and then slewed upright to plume its feathers, and shake the pink tuft on its head.

‘No sooner had I got up the stair, however, than, to my perfect delight, I saw Violet Hyde was still sitting aft, and the old Irishwoman gone; so I stepped to the taffrail at once, and, for something to be about, I hauled up the shark-hook from astern. The moment I caught her eye, the young lady smiled—by way of making up, no doubt, for the old one. ‘How *very* solitary it is!’ said she, rising and looking out; ‘the ship almost seems deserted, except by us!’ ‘By Jove! I almost wish it were,’ thought I. ‘A dead calm, madam,’ I said, ‘and likely to hold—the under-swell’s gone quite down, and a haze growing.’ ‘Are we sure *ever* to leave this spot then?’ asked she, with a slight look of anxiety. ‘Never fear it, ma’am,’ said I; ‘as soon as the haze melts again, we’re near a breeze, I assure you—only, by the length of the calm and the heat together, not to speak of our being so far to east’ard, I’m afraid we mayn’t get rid of it without a gale at the end to match.’ ‘Indeed?’ said Miss Hyde.

‘The fact was, Westwood and I had been keeping a log, and calculated just now we were somewhere to south-eastward of Ascension; whereas, by the captain and mate’s reckoning she was much farther to west.

‘‘I never thought the sea could appear so dreadful,’ said she, as if to herself—‘much more than in a storm.’ ‘Why,

madam,' said I, 'you haven't exactly seen one this voyage—one needs to be close-hauled off the Cape for that.'

"Somehow or other, in speaking to *her*, by this time I forgot entirely about keeping up the sham cadet, and slipped into my own way again; so all at once I *felt* her two dark-blue eyes looking at me curiously. 'How!—why,' exclaimed she suddenly, and then laughing, 'you seem to know all about it!—why, you speak—have you been studying sea affairs so thoroughly, sir, with your friend, who—but I *do* think, now, one can scarcely *trust* to what you have said?' 'Well—why—well,' said I, fiddling with the shark-hook, 'I don't know how it is, but I feel as if I must have been at sea some time or other before; you wouldn't suppose it, ma'am, but whenever I fix my eyes on a particular rope, I seem almost to know the name of it.' 'And its *use* too?' asked she, merrily. 'I shouldn't wonder!' said I; 'perhaps I was *born* at sea, you know, madam!' and I gave a side-look to notice how she took it. 'Ah! perhaps!' said Miss Hyde, laughing: 'but do you know one sometimes fancies these things; and now I think of it, sir, I even imagined for a moment I had seen *yourself* before!' 'Oh,' said I, 'that couldn't be the case; I'm sure, for my part, I should recollect clear enough if I'd seen—a—a *lady* anywhere! I think you said something of the kind, ma'am, that night of the last squall—about the water and the clouds, ma'am, you remember?' The young lady looked away, though a notion seemed to flash through her mind. 'Yes,' said she, 'that terrible rain, *you were*——' 'Washed into the lee-scuppers,' said I, indifferently, for I didn't want her to suspect it was *I* that had kissed her hand in the dark as I carried her in. 'I hope Sir Charles and yourself got in safe, Miss Hyde?' However, she was watching the water alongside, and suddenly she exclaimed, 'Dear! what a pretty little fish!' 'By heavens!' said I, seeing the creature with its sharp nose and blue bars, as it glanced about near the surface, and then swam in below the ship's bilge again, 'that's one of the old villain's pilots—he's lying right across our keel! I wish I could catch that shark!'

"The pork was of no use for such an old sea-lawyer, and I cast a wistful eye on the Irishwoman's fat pug-dog stretched asleep on her shawl by the bulwark; 'he'd take *that* in a trice though!' I even laid out some marline from a stern-locker,

and noticed how neatly one could pass the hook under her belly round to the tail, and seize her so snugly on, muzzled and all; but it was no go, with the devil to pay afterwards. All of a sudden I heard somebody hawking and spitting above the awning forward, near where the cockatoo kept still trying to master his own name. 'The Yankee, for a thousand!' thought I; 'is Daniel trying to walk along the spanker-boom?' Next, someone sung out, 'Hal-loo-oo-oo!' as if there was a tomahawk over him, ready to split his brain. Miss Hyde looked alarmed, when the Scotch mate, as I thought, roared, 'Shiver my tops'ls!' Then it was a sailor hailing gruffly, 'Bloody Capting Brown—bloody Capting Brown—Capting Brown!'

"'Somebody drunk aloft!' thought I, walking forward to see; when a funny little black head peeped round the awning with a yellow nose as sharp as a marling-spike, and red spectacles, seemingly, round its keen little eyes; then, with a flutter and a hop, the steward's pet mina-bird* came down, and lighted just under the cockatoo. 'Ha!' said I, laughing, 'it's only Parson Barnacle!' as the men called him—a sooty little creature scarce bigger than a blackbird, with a white spot on each wing, and a curious pair of natural glasses on his head, which they kept in the forecastle and taught all sorts of 'jaw,' till they swore he could have put the ship about, took kindly to tar, and hunted the cockroaches like a cat.

"No doubt he was glad to meet his countryman the cockatoo, but Tippoo stuck up his crest, swelled his chops, and looked dreadfully frightened; while the mina-bird cocked his head on one side, gave a knowing wink as it were, though all the time as grave, with his spectacles, as a real parson. 'How's her head?' croaked he, in a voice like a quartermaster's; 'blowing hard!' 'Old Capting Brown!' and hopped nearer to the poor cockatoo, who could stand it no longer, but hooked himself up the backstay as fast as possible, out of sight, the chain running with him; and just as I swung myself clear of the awning to run aloft for a catch of it, out flew Parson Barnacle to the end of the crojack-yard,

* *Mina-bird*, or grackle, a frequent pet in homeward-bound East-Indiamen, and singular for its mimetic faculty; but impudent, and, from educational disadvantages, not particularly select in its expressions: appearance as described by the lieutenant.

while the cockatoo gave a flap that loosed the *kitmagar's* lubberly hitch, and sent him down with his wings spread on the water.

"At another time it wouldn't have cost me a thought to go head-foremost after him, when I heard his young mistress exclaiming, 'Oh, poor dear Tippoo will be drowned!' but recollecting our hungry green friend on the other side, I jumped down for the end of a rope to slip myself quietly alongside with. However, at the very moment, Tom, the man-o'-war's-man, happening to come up from the fore-hatchway to throw something overboard, and seeing Miss Hyde's cockatoo, off went his shoes and jacket at once, and I heard the splash as he struck the water. I had scarce time to think, either, before I saw Mick O'Hooney's red head shoot up on deck, and heard him sing out, 'Man overboard, be the powers, boys! Folly my lader! Hurroo!' and over he sprang. 'Here's dip,' said another, and in half a minute every man that could swim was floundering in the smooth water alongside, or his head showing as it came up—pitching the cockatoo to each other, and all ready to enjoy their bathe; though, for my part, I made but one spring to the ship's starboard quarter, to use the only chance of saving the thoughtless fellows from a bloody fate to some of them.

"I knew the shark would be cautious at first, on such a sudden to-do, and I had marked his whereabouts while the men were well toward the bows; and 'hang it,' thought I, seeing the old woman's fat pug in my way, 'Dianny, or die all; I bear no malice, but you must go for it, my beauty!' As quick as thought, I made one turn of marline round her nose, took off the pork, and lashed her fast on to the hook all standing, in spite of her squeaks; then twisted the lady's shawl round the chain for a blind to it, and flung the whole right over the larboard quarter, where I guessed the old fellow would be slewing round astern to have a look out before he went fairly in chase. I watched the line sink slowly with the weight over the gunwale for half a minute, afraid to let him see my head, and trembling for fear I should hear a cry from one of the men: when jerk went the rope clear of a belaying-pin as he ran off with his bait. I took a quick turn to hook him smartly in the throat, and then eased off again till the 'cleets' brought him up with a 'surge' fit to have parted the

line, had it not been good new inch-and-a-half rope—though, as it was, the big Indiaman would soon have sheered stern-round to the force of it, if he'd only pulled fair.

“The young lady stood noticing what I did, first in a perplexed sort of a way, and then with no little surprise, especially when the shark gave every now and then a fiercer tug, as he took a sweep astern; by this time, however, everybody was on deck in a crowd, the passengers all in a flurry, and half of the men scrambling up from alongside to tail on to the line, and run him out of water. So away they went with it full-speed towards the bows, as soon as the ladies were out of the way—dragging two or three cadets back-foremost, head over heels, down the poop stair—till, in spite of his tugging, the shark's round snout showed over the taffrail, with the mouth wide open under his chin, as it were, and one row of teeth laid flat behind another, like a comb-maker's shop-counter. A running bowline passed round his handsome waist, then another pull, and over he came on the poop, floundering fourteen feet long, and flourishing his tail for room, till the carpenter chopped it across, in a lucky moment with his axe.

“All hands gathered round the shark to see him cut up, which was as good as a play to them, becalmed as we were; when, to my no small dismay, I heard Mrs Brigadier Brady's loud voice asking where her dog was; and the brigadier himself, who seemed more afraid of his wife than anybody else, kept poking about with his red-faced English butler to find the animal. ‘For God's sake,’ said he, in a half whisper, twenty times over, ‘haven't ye seen Mrs Brady's dog, any of ye?—she'll rout the ship inside out for it, captain, if we don't soon ase her mind.’ However, I knew only Miss Hyde was aware who caught the shark, and as she didn't appear to have told, why of course I kept all fast myself. ‘Here's a 'baccy-box!’ sung out the big old boatswain, standing astride over the tail, while the cook and his black mate ripped away from the tail up. ‘Hand over, if ye please, sir,’ said ‘ugly’ Harry, ‘it's mine, Mr Burton!’ Harry gave it a wipe on his knee, and coolly bit a quid off the end of his lost pigtail. The next thing was Ford's hat, which no one claimed, so black Sambo clapped it on his woolly head.

“‘What's that you've got there now, Sambo?’ said the

boatswain: 'out with it, my lad!' 'Golly!' chuckled the nigger, rolling the whites of his eyes and grinning like mad; 'oh sar, Misser Barton! dis 'ere shark riglar navigator! I 'clare to you, sar, um got chr'ometer aboard. Oh gum; berry much t'ink dis your own lost silber tickler, Misser Barton.' 'Bless me, so it is, my lad,' said the boatswain, as the black handed him a silver watch as big as a turnip, and he looked at the cook, who was busy fumbling with his knife. 'Sorry as you was *taxed* with it, doctor,*' said he, doubtfully; 'well, I'm blowed, though, it only goes an hour and a half—and here it's a-ticking yet.' Here a burst of laughter went round, and somebody sung out, 'Maybe the ould pawn-broking Judas of a shark winded it up hisself, just to mark the time o' his "goin' off the hooks."'" 'I say, doctor,' hailed another, 'too bad, ain't it though, to cut up *your uncle*?' 'Ha, ha, ha,' cried the cadets and writers, looking at the Scotch surgeon; 'd'ye hear that, doctor? I wouldn't stand it. They say you ain't particular in Edinbro', though. Some rum mistakes happened there, eh, doctor?'

"The Scotchman got into a passion at this, being the worst cut they could give any fellow from a country where they were famous for kindred and body-snatching at once—but all of a sudden there was a 'Hullo! Shiver my taw'sels! What's this? Let's see'; and the whole poopful of us were shoving together, and jumping on each other's shoulders to have a look. 'Well, we-ell,' said the old boatswain, as he peered curiously into the mess of shark's bowels—I'll be blowed.' 'The likes o' that now!' croaked the old sailmaker, lifting up his two hands, 'tain't lucky, Mr Burton!' 'My eye! them's not young *sharks*, anyhow!' said one of the men. 'What's t'ou think they be, mun,' said the north-country Chips, 'but litter o' young blind poops? an' here's t' ou'd un. see, as deed's mutton! Dang him, but someun's got an' baited t' hook wi't, there's nou't else in's guts.'

"The whole poop was one roar of laughing, when Mrs Brady's pug was found delivered of four pups inside the shark, since she went overboard, and two of 'em alive; the news ran fore and aft in a moment. 'Took short she's been, Jack!' said one. 'Beats the prophet Joney!' 'I say, mate,

* Familiar metonymy, or nickname, at sea, for the ship's cook.

them whelps is born twice over. Blessed if my Sal at home, now, wouldn't give a year's 'lotment for one on 'em.'

"'Look out, all hands of ye,' cried someone, 'there's the old girl herself coming on deck; sharp's the word.' And away we scuttled right and left, some aloft, and some down one poop-ladder, as Mrs Brady, with the brigadier and his butler after her, came fuming up the other. The black made one spring over the quarter as soon as he saw her; but the Irish topman, Mick, slipped his foot amongst the shark's blood, and rolled on his back, while the old bo'sun made stand in the thick of it behind. 'Saze the villains, I charge ye, brigadier,' screamed Mrs Brady, though he and his manservant only kept dodging the boatswain round a sort of a quagmire of blood and grease, while the old vixen caught Mick by his red hair and whiskers. 'Where's my dog, ye murderous spalpeen?' said she, panting for breath; 'what have ye done with my Dianny, ye monsther? Spake, or I'll——' 'Be the holy elaven thousand, yer ladyship!' said Mick, 'an' it's *lost* did ye think she wor! Isn't there *five* of 'em back! Whisper! yer ladyship's riv'rence—she's *laid in*, poor craythure, an'——' 'Oh! you Irish thief!' Tug came both Mrs Brady's hands through his hair, while the butler caught a kick in the stomach from Mick's foot. 'Murther!' gasped the poor fellow, 'sure an' I dun' know she was ayven a faym'le, fur me own part; bad luck t' ye mates, give uz a hand. Och, an' is this the road ye thrate a counthryman, mim?' 'Me your countryman! ye bog-trottin' wretch ye!' screamed the old fury, her brogue getting worse the more she heated—'take *that*!—don't rise, if ye dare.' 'Faix thin, yer ladyship darlin', said O'Hooney, grinning in spite of his hard usage, 'I tould a lie—och, lave some o' me hair!—murther intirely! I'm——'

"All the time none of us could stir for sheer laughing, but seeing poor Mike like to fare hard with the old vixen, who was near as big as himself, and as strong as a horse, I whispered to the men to run round and let go the poop awning—so down it came, with a few buckets of water in it, over the five of them; and you just saw Mrs Brady's sharp elbow through the canvas, lifted for the next slap, when we had her all fast, struggling like a cat in a bag, while O'Hooney and the boatswain crept out below. 'Stiff breeze that as

we've had!' said the bo'sun shaking himself on the forecastle. 'Couldn't ye've bowsed over on the old jade's pitticuts, Mick?' said one of his shipmates, 'and capsized her all standing?' 'Sorra fut you'd stir, yourself, mate,' said he, wiping his face, 'wid such a shay grinnydeer! she'd man-handle ye as asy's twurl a mop!'

CHAPTER IX

"AFTER all this, you may suppose one didn't weary so much, even of the calm. As soon as the decks were clear, most of us took tea on the poop, for fear of meeting the brigadier's lady below, everyone holding his cup ready for a start. Rollock, the planter, who had slept and swung in his cot half the day, was like to split his sides when he heard the story; by-the-way, I believe both the little pups lived and throve on goat's milk, and the men called one of them 'Young Jonah,' though he had so much of the terrier that the old lady disowned him.

"It was quite dark, and cool for a night near the Line, though not a ripple stirred, and I stayed after the rest to smoke a cigar, stopping every now and then near the aftermost bull's-eye, that shone through the deck, and thinking of Lota. 'By Jove!' thought I, 'she hasn't said a word to the judge about our having met before. Think of having a secret, almost, with *her*!' After all, though, I felt well enough I might as soon hope for the Emperor of China's daughter as for such a creature, unless something wonderfully strange fell out; deucedly in love as I was, I wasn't puppy enough to fancy I'd ever succeed by mere talk; 'but here's for a bold heart and a weather eye,' I thought; 'and if these can't do it, I *will*!' said I aloud, when someone clapped me on the shoulder.

"'Well, Tom, are you there?' said I, thinking it was Westwood. 'Why,' answered old Rollock, laughing, 'not so far wrong, my boy—but as it's thirty years since anyone called me so, I thought you *were*, for a moment!—Meditating, eh?' 'Only a cigar before bed-time—will you have one, sir?' 'Ah—well,' said the planter, 'I'll take a light at least

—queer life this, eh? Shouldn't know this *was* water, now—more like train-oil! Looks *junglish* a little under the stars yonder.' 'Nothing but the haze come down,' said I; 'tis clear enough aloft, though—look out for squalls ere long.' 'As your friend Ford would have it,' said Rollock; 'but how a lad of your spirit can manage to stand this so well, I can't think!' 'Deyvilish dull, sir!' said I, with a lazy drawl, 'but can't be helped, you know.' 'Come, come, now, don't mend it by copying poor Winterton,' chuckled Rollock; 'you're no fool, Collins, so don't pretend to be. I say though, Collins, my boy,' continued he rather gravely, 'there is one really soft piece I begin to notice in you lately—I fear you're falling in love with that girl!' 'I, sir!' said I; 'dear me, what makes you——' 'My dear boy,' went on the kind-hearted old fellow, 'I take an interest in you; no lad of your stuff practises all this tomfoolery without something under it, and I see you've *some* serious meaning or other. Did you know her before?' 'Oh—why—not exactly,' I dropped out, taken rather short. 'I see, I see!' he went on; 'but I tell you what, Collins, a cadet can do nothing madder than marry at first landing; she had better be a cold-hearted flirt, after all—though, God knows, no man can say what *that* does but one that's—felt it!—I—I mean I *knew*—a young fellow that went out as ambitious as you can be, and he——'

"Here the planter's voice shook a little, and he stopped, puffing at his cheroot till the short end of it just lighted up his hook nose and part of his big white whiskers in the dark, only you saw his eye glistening, too. 'Devil take it!' thought I, 'who'd have expected the old boy to be so sharp, though?' 'Well but, Collins,' said he at last, 'just you enter heart and soul into your profession; I'd stake my life you'll rise, who knows how far—when you get captain's pay even, *then* you may think of it—that is, if she——' 'Why,' said I, 'd'ye suppose the judge would——' 'Judge!' exclaimed Mr Rollock—'worse and worse! Weren't we talking of pretty little Kate Fortescue? My *dear* boy, you don't intend to say you mean Miss Hyde! I left *that* to your puppy of a "first officer," as they call him! Why, that young girl will be the beauty of Calcutta.' At this I fancied someone else gave a whistle near us. 'Of course, sir,' said I, raising my voice, 'you didn't suppose me such a fool.' In fact, Miss Fortescue had never

entered my head at all. 'Something strange about *you*, Collins!' said the planter, a little shortly; 'you puzzle me, I must say.' As we turned to go below, I heard somebody walk down the poop-ladder, and then the mate's voice sung out from the binnacle to 'strike eight bells!'

"The calm was as dead as ever next morning, and, if possible, hotter than before—not a rope changed aloft, nor a cloth in the sails moved; but it was pretty hazy round us, which made the water a sort of pale old-bottle blue, that sickened you to look at; and a long dipping and drawling heave gradually got up as if there were blankets on it; the ship, of course, shifting round and round again slowly, like a dog going to lie down, and the helm giving every now and then a sudden jolt. Near noon it cleared up with a blaze of light, as it were; the sole difference at first being, that what looked like melting lead before now turned into so many huge bright sheets of tin, every sudden bend of it as good as flashing up thousands of needles in your eyes. A good deal surprised we were, however, shortly after, to find there was a sail in sight, another square-rigged vessel, seemingly standing up on the horizon six or seven miles off. Being end on to us at the time, though every glass in the ship was brought to bear on her, 'twas hard to say what she was; then she and we went bobbing and going up and down with a long round heave between us, slowly enough, but always at cross purposes, like two fellows see-sawing on a plank over a dyke. When she was up, we were down, and we just caught sight of her royal, no bigger than a gull on the water; jerk went our rudder, and next time she seemed to have vanished out of the glasses altogether, till we walked round to the other side, and made her out again under the awning on the opposite beam. At length she lifted broad to us for a moment or two, showing a long pale sort of hull with a red streak, apparently without ports, and brig-rigged, though the space betwixt her two masts was curious for that kind of craft.

"'Wonderful light-sparred for her size that brig, sir,' said the third officer, dropping his glass. 'Ay, so she is, Mr Small,' replied Captain Williamson; 'what would you call her then? You've as good knowledge of craft as any man, Mr Small, I think.' 'Why,' said the old mate, screwing his eye harder for a long look, 'I'd say she's—not a cruiser, Captain

Williamson—no, nor a Greenock Indyman—nor a——’ ‘Oh!’ said Finch, ‘some African timberer or other, I daresay, Small.’ ‘Well, Mr Finch,’ said the third mate, handing him the glass, ‘mayhap you’ll just say yourself, sir.’ ‘No, no, Mr Small,’ said the captain; ‘I’d trust to you as soon as any man, sir, in a matter of the kind.’ ‘Why, the hull of her’s wonderful Yankee-like, sir,’ said Small again; ‘I’m thinking they’ve been and *squared* her out of a schooner—and made a bad job of it too, sir! Bless us! what a lean-headed pair o’ taups’ls—as high as our fore one, sir.’ Suddenly the old mate gave his thigh a slap, and laid down his glass on the capstan; ‘Lor’, sir!’ said he, ‘that’s the thing; she’s nothing more nor less but a John Crapeau, Captain Williamson!’

“‘I daresay you’re right, Mr Small,’ said the skipper, taking the glass; ‘just so—ay, ay—I thought it myself!’ ‘Pity Old Nap’s boxed up yonder nowadays, then, sir,’ said the first officer, rubbing his hands and pointing to eastward, where he thought St Helena was; ‘why, sir, we should have the peppering of the Frenchman; I don’t suppose we’d need to care though she were twice the size—and what’s more, we want fresh water before seeing the Cape, sir!’ ‘Well,’ said the old skipper, laughing, ‘that is the worst of it, Finch! As for spirit, you’ve as much as any man, Mr Finch, and I *do* think we’d know how to take the weather-hand of him—eh?’ ‘I’ll be bound we should!’ said Finch, laughing too. As for the Frenchman, both Westwood and I had made him out by his rig at once, thanks to man-o’-war practice; but we smiled to each other at the notion of making a prize of Monsieur, under Finch’s management, with not a gun that could have been used for half a day, and everything else at sixes and sevens.

“In a little while it was proposed amongst the cadets, hot as the calm was, to make a party to go and see the French vessel. Ford of course was at the head of it. Winterton thought they would no doubt have plenty of champagne on board, and some others, who could row, wanted to try their hands. Accordingly the captain’s gig was got ready, a sort of awning rigged over it, and two or three of them got in; when one, who was Miss Fortescue’s cousin, persuaded her to join, if Mr Rollock would come. Then the brigadier, being rather a good-humoured man, said he should like to face the French

once more, and Daniel Snout shoved himself eagerly in without asking, by your leave. One of the men was sent to take charge; and as there was room still, I was just going to jump in too, for the amusement of it, when Mrs Brady hurried to the taffrail with her parasol up, and said, if the brigadier went she should go as well—in fact, the old woman's jealousy of her rib was always laughably plain. 'Hang it! then,' thought I, 'catch me putting myself in the same boat with *her*! the same ship is enough in all conscience!' So away they were lowered off the davits, and began pulling in tolerable style for the brig, a couple of hours' good work for such hands at mid-day, smooth water as it was.

"'Now, gentlemen,' said the first officer briskly, as we looked after them dipping over the long bright blue heave—'now, gentlemen, and ladies also, if you please, we'll have another party as soon as the men get their dinner—give these gentlemen a full hour's law, we'll overhaul them. See the larboard quarter-boat clear, Jacobs.' It was just the least possible hazy again behind the brig in the distance, and as the judge stood talking to his daughter on the poop, I heard her say, 'Is the other vessel not coming nearer already, papa? See how much more distinct its sails are this moment—there!—one almost observes the white canvas!' 'Pooh, Lota, child!' answered Sir Charles, 'that cannot be—'tis perfectly calm, don't you know?' In fact, however, Lota showed a sailor's eye for air, and I was noticing it myself; but it was *only* the air made it look so. 'Ah! now,' exclaimed she again, 'tis as distant as ever! That must have been the light'; besides, the brig had been lifting on a wide swell.

"'I beg pardon, Sir Charles,' said the mate, coming up and taking off his cap, 'but might I use the freedom—perhaps yourself and Miss Hyde would like to visit the French brig?' The judge looked at his daughter as much as to ask if she would like it. 'Oh yes! so much!' exclaimed she, her bright eyes sparkling, 'shall we?' 'No! Not I!' said Sir Charles. 'I shall take my siesta. Quite safe, sir—eh?' 'Oh, quite safe, Sir Charles!' said Finch, 'a dead calm, sir—I'll take the utmost care you may be sure, Sir Charles—as safe as the deck, sir!' 'Oh, very well,' replied the judge, and he walked down to see after his tiffin. The young lady was going down the quarter-gallery stair, when I caught my opportunity to say—

‘I hope you’ll excuse it, Miss Hyde, ma’am—but I *do* trust you’ll not risk going in the boat so far, just now!’ Half a minute after I spoke, she turned round, and looked at me with a curious sort of expression in her charming face, which I couldn’t make out—whether it was mischievous, whether it was pettish, or whether ’twas inquisitive.

“‘Dear me!’ said she, ‘why—do you——’ ‘The weather might change,’ I said, looking round about, ‘and I shouldn’t wonder if it did—or a swell might get up—or——’ ‘I must say, Mr—Mr Collins,’ said she, laughing slightly, ‘you are very gloomy in your anticipations—almost timorous, I declare! I wonder how you came to be so weather-wise! But why did you not advise poor Mrs Brady, now?’ I couldn’t see her face as she spoke, but the tone of the last words made me feel I’d have given worlds to look round and see what it was like at the moment. ‘Perhaps, ma’am,’ said I, ‘you may remember the *rain*?’ ‘Well, we shall see, sir!’ replied she, glancing up with a bright sparkle in her eye for an instant, but only toward the end of the spanker-boom, as it were; and then tripping down the stair.

“I kept watching the gig pull slowly toward the brig in the distance, and the cutter making ready on our quarter till the men were in, with Jacobs amongst them; where they sat waiting in no small glee for the mate and his party, who came up a few minutes after; and I was just beginning to hope that Violet Hyde had taken my advice, when she and another young lady came out of the round-house, dressed for the trip, and the captain gallantly handed them in. ‘My compliments to the French skipper, Mr Finch,’ said the captain, laughing, ‘and if he ain’t better engaged, happy to see him to dinner at—two bells* in the dog-watch, we’ll make it!’ ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ said Finch. ‘Now then!—all ready?’ ‘Smythe’s coming yet,’ said a ‘writer.’ ‘We can’t wait any longer for him,’ replied the mate; ease away the falls, handsomely, on deck!’ ‘Stop,’ said I, ‘I’ll go then!’ ‘Too late, young gentleman,’ answered the mate, sharply, ‘you’ll cant us gunnel up, sir!—lower away, there!’ However, I caught hold of a rope and let myself down the side, time enough to jump lightly into her stern-sheets the moment they touched the water. The officer stared

* Five o’clock P.M.

at me as he took the yoke-lines to steer, but he said nothing, and the boat shoved off; while Miss Hyde's blue eyes only opened out, as it were, for an instant, at seeing me drop in so unceremoniously; and her companion laughed.

“‘I shouldn't have supposed you so nimble, Mr Collins!’ said the writer, looking at me through his eye-glass. ‘Oh,’ said I, ‘Ford and I have practised climbing a good deal lately.’ ‘Ha! ha!’ said the civilian, ‘shouldn't be surprised, now, if your friend were to take the navigation out of Mr Finch's hands, some day!’ ‘Bless me, yes, sir!’ said Finch, with a guffaw, as he sat handling the lines carelessly, and smiling to the ladies, with his smart cap over one ear; ‘to be sure—ha! ha! ha!—it's certain, Mr Beveridge! Wouldn't you take the helm here, sir?’ to me. ‘Oh, thank you, no, sir!’ replied I, modestly, ‘I'm not quite so far *yet*—but we've got a loan of Hamilton Moore and Falconer's Dictionary from the midshipmen, and mean to——’ ‘No doubt you'll teach us a trick or two yet!’ said Finch, with a sneer. ‘Now, for instance,’ said I, coolly, ‘aloft yonder, you've got the *throat halliards* jammed in the block with a gasket, and the mizzen-topsail cluelines rove wrong side of it, which Hamilton Moore distinctly——’

“‘Hang the lubber that did it, so they are!’ exclaimed the mate, looking through the spy-glass we had with us. ‘Now you've your *jibs* hauled down, sir,’ continued I, ‘and if a squall came on abeam, no doubt they'd wish to shorten sail from *aft*, and keep her away—however, she would broach-to at once, as Hamilton Moore shows must——’ ‘You and Hamilton Moore may—— Well, no fear of a squall just now, at any rate, ladies,’ said he. ‘Stretch out, men—let's head upon Mr Ford and his gig, yet!’

“Terribly hot it was, close to the water, and so stifling that you scarce could breathe, while the long glassy swell was far higher than one thought it from the ship's deck; however, we had an awning hoisted, and it refreshed one a little both to hear the water and feel it below again, as the cutter went sliding and rippling over it to long slow strokes of the oars; her crew being all men-o'-war's-men, that knew how to pull together and take it easy. The young ladies kept gazing rather anxiously at the big old *Seringapatam*, as she rose and dropped heavily on the calm, amused though they were at first by a sight of their late home turning ‘gable’ on to us, with

her three masts in one, and a white straw hat or two watching us from her taffrail ; whereas, ahead, they only now and then caught a glimpse of the brig's upper canvas, over a hot, hazy, sullen-looking sweep of water as deep-blue as indigo—with six hairy brown breasts bending before them to the oars, and as many pair of queer, rollicking, fishy sort of eyes, fixed steadily on the bonnets aft, in a shame-faced, down-hill kind of way, like fellows that couldn't help it. In fact, I noticed a curious grin now and then on every one of the men's faces, and a look to each other when they caught sight of myself sitting behind the mate, as he paid out his high-flying speeches; Jacobs, again, regarding me all the while out of the whites of his eyes, as it were, in a wooden, unknowing fashion fit to have made a cat laugh—seeing he never missed his mark for one moment, and drew back his head at every pull with the air of a drunken man keeping sight of his own waistcoat buttons.

“By the time we were half-way, the swell began to get considerable, and the mate stepped up abaft to look for the gig. ‘Can't see the boat yet,’ said he; ‘give way there, my lads—stretch out and bend your backs! there's the brig!’ ‘Hallo!’ exclaimed he again, ‘she's clued up royals and to'gallants'ls! By heavens! there go her tops'ls down too! Going to bend new sails, though, I daresay, for it looks clear enough there.’ ‘The ship's run up a flag, aft sir,’ said Jacobs. ‘The——so she has,’ said Finch, turning round; ‘recall signal! What's wrong? Sorry *we* can't dine aboard the French vessel this time, ladies!’ said he, ‘extremely *so*—and the griffins there after all, too. I hope you won't be disappointed in any great measure, Miss Hyde; but if *you* wished it now, miss, I'd even keep on, and——’

“The young lady coloured a little at this, and turned to her companion just as I remembered her doing from the dragoon in the ball-room. ‘Do you not think, Miss Wyndham,’ said she, ‘*we* ought not to wish any officer of the ship should get reproved, perhaps, on *our* account?’ ‘Oh dear, no,’ said Miss Wyndham: ‘indeed, Mr Finch, you had better go back, if the captain orders you.’

““Hold on there with your larboard oars, you lubbers!’ sang out Finch, biting his lip, and round we went, pulling for the Indiaman again; but by this time the swell was becoming so heavy as to make it hard work, and it was soon rarely we

could see her at all; for nothing gets up so fast as a swell, sometimes, near the Line; neither one way nor the other, but right up and down, without a breath of wind, in huge smooth hills of water darker than lead, not a speck of foam, and the sky hot and clear. 'Twas almost as if a weight had been lifted from off the long heaving calm, and the whole round of it were going up dark into the sky, in one weltering jumble, the more strange that it was quiet; sweep up it took the boat, and the bright wet oar-blades spread feathering out for another stroke to steady her, let alone making way; though that was nothing to the look of the Indiaman when we got near. She was rolling her big black hull round in it as helpless as a cask; now one side, then the other, dipping gunwale to in the round swell that came heaping up level with her very rail, and went sheeting out bright through the bulwarks again; the masts jumping, clamps and boom-irons creaking on the yards, and every sail on her shaking, as her lower yard-arms took it by turns to aim at the water—you heard all the noise of it, the plunge of her flat broadside, the plash from her scuppers, the jolts of her rudder, and voices on board; and wet you may be sure she *was* from stem to stern.

“‘Comfortable,’ thought I; ‘we’ve come home too soon of a washing-day, and may wait at the door, I fear!’ ‘Oh dear,’ exclaimed the three griffins, ‘how are we to get in!’ and the young ladies looked pale at the sight. The mate steered for her larboard quarter without saying a word, but I saw he lost coolness and got nervous—not at all the man for a hard pinch: seemingly, he meant to make a dash alongside and hook on. ‘If you do, sir,’ said I, ‘you’ll be smashed to staves’; and all at once the ship appeared almost over our heads, while the boat took a send in. I looked to Jacobs and the men, and they gave one long stroke off, that seemed next heave to put a quarter of a mile between us. ‘Close shave that,’ said the bowman. ‘Begs pardon, sir,’ said Jacobs, touching his hat, with his eyes still fixed past the mate, upon me; ‘hasn’t we better keep steadying off, sir, till such time as a sulk in the swell——’ ‘Hold your jaw, sirrah,’ growled Finch, as he looked ahead still more flurried; ‘there’s a *squall* coming yonder, gentlemen, and if we don’t get quick aboard, we may lose the ship in it! Pull round, d’ye hear there!’ Sure enough, when we lifted, there was the French brig clear out

against a sulky patch of dark-grey sky, growing in, as it were, far off behind the uneven swell, till it began to look pale; the Indiaman's topsails gave a loud flap out, too, one after the other, and fell to the mast again.

"Suddenly I caught the glance of Violet Hyde's eyes watching me seriously, as I sat overhauling the Indiaman for a notion of what to do, and I fancied the charming girl had somehow got nearer to me during the last minute or two, whether she knew it or not; at any rate, the thought of having such a creature to protect made all my blood tingle. 'Never fear, ma'am,' said I, in a half whisper; when Finch's eye met mine, and he threw me a malicious look, sufficient to show what a devil the fellow would be if ever he had occasion; however, he gave the sign for the men to stretch out again, and high time it was, as the Indiaman's maintopsail made another loud clap like a musket-shot. Still he was holding right for her *quarter*—the roll the ship had on her was fearful, and it was perfect madness to try it; but few merchant mates have chanced to be boating in a Line swell, I daresay; when just as we came head on for her starboard counter, I took the boat's tiller a sudden shove with my foot, as if by accident, that sent us sheering in close under her *stern*. The bowman prized his boathook into the rudder-chains, where the big hull swung round us on both sides like an immense wheel round its barrel, every stern window with a face watching us—though one stroke of the loose rudder would have stove us to bits, and the swell was each moment like to make the men let go, as it hove us up almost near enough to have caught a hand from the lower-deck.

"'For God's sake steady your wheel,' said I; 'hard a port!' while the mate was singing out for a line. 'Now, up you go,' said I to Jacobs in the hubbub, 'look sharp, and send us down a whip and basket from the boom-end, as we did once in the *Pandora*, you know!'. Up the rope went Jacob like a cat, hand over hand; and five minutes after, down came the 'basket' over our heads into the boat, made out of a studding-sail and three capstan-bars, like a big grocer's scale dangling from the spanker-boom. The mate proposed to go up first with Miss Hyde, but she hung back in favour of her companion; so away aloft went Miss Wyndham and he, swinging across the Indiaman's stern as she rolled again, with a gant-line to steady

them in—Finch holding on to the whip by one hand, and the other round the young lady, while my blood crept at the thought how it might have been Lota herself!

“As soon as it came down again, she looked for a moment from me to Jacobs, when Captain Williamson himself shouted over the taffrail! ‘Sharp, sharp, there! the squall’s coming down! she’ll be up in the wind! let’s get the helm free!’ and directly after I found myself swinging twenty feet over the water with Violet Hyde, as the ship heeled to a puff that filled the spanker, and rose again on a huge swell, gathering steerage way, while every bolt of canvas in her flapped in again at once like thunder. I felt her shudder and cling to me—there was one half-minute we swung fairly clear of the stern; they stopped hoisting—and I almost thought I’d have wished that same half-minute half-a-day; but a minute after she was in the judge’s arms on the poop; the men had contrived to get the cadets on board, too, and the boat was dragging astern, with the line veered out, and her crew still in it baling her out.

“I fixed my eyes at once, breathless as we of the boat party were, on the weather-signs and the other vessel, which everybody on the poop was looking at, as soon as we were safe, and our friends in the gig had to be thought of. The short topswell was beginning to soften in long regular seas, with just air enough aloft to give our light sails a purchase on it, and put an end to the infernal clatter; but the vapour had gathered quicker than you could well fancy behind the brig in the distance, so that she looked already a couple of miles nearer, rising up two or three times on as many huge swells that shone like blue glass, while she steadied herself like a tight-rope dancer on the top of them, by a studding-sail set high from each side. On the far horizon beyond her, you’d have thought there was a deep black ditch sunk along under the thickening blue haze, as it stretched out past her to both hands, till actually the solid breast of it seemed to shove the brig bodily forward over the oily-like water, every spar and rope distinct; then the fog lifted below as if the teeth of a saw came splitting through it, and we saw her bearing down towards us—cloud, water, and all, as it were—with a white heap of foam at her bows.

“‘Brace up sharp, Mr Finch!’ said the old skipper hastily, ‘and stand over to meet her. Confound this! we *must* have

these people out of that brig in a trice ; we shall soon have a touch of the Horse Latitudes, or my name's not Richard Williamson—ay, and bid good-bye to 'em too, I think !'

"For a quarter of an hour or so, accordingly, we kept forging slowly ahead, while the brig continued to near us. No one spoke, almost—you heard the lazy swash of the water round our fore-chains, and the stillness aboard had a gloomy enough effect, as one noticed the top of the haze creep up into round vapoury heads upon the sky, and felt it darkening aloft besides. We were scarce three-quarters of a mile apart, and could see her sharp black bows drip over the bright sheathing, as she rolled easily on the swell ; when the Indiaman suddenly lost way again, sheered head round, and slap went all her sails from the royals down, as if she had fired a broadside. Almost the next moment, a long low growl ran muttering and rumbling far away round the horizon, from the clouds and back to them again, as if they had been some huge monster or other on the watch, with its broad green muzzle shooting quietly over us as it lay ; the brig dipped her gilt figure-head abeam of us, and then showed her long red streak ; the swell sinking fast, and the whole sea far and wide coming out from the sky as dark and round as the mahogany drum-head of the capstan.

"'Bless me, Small,' said the captain, 'but I hope they've not knocked a hole in my gig—ay, there *they* are, I think, looking over the brig's quarter—but don't seem to have a boat to swim ! Get the cutter hauled alongside, Mr Stebbing,' continued he to the fourth mate, 'and go aboard for them at once—confounded bothering, this ! Mind get my gig safe, sir, if you please—can ye *parley-voo*, though, Mr Stebbing ?' 'Not a word, sir,' said the young mate, a gentlemanly, rather soft fellow, whom the other three all used to snub. 'Bless me, can't we muster a bit o' French amongst us ?' said the skipper ; 'catch a *monshoor* that knows a word of English like any other man—specially if they've a chance of keeping my gig !' 'Well, sir,' said I, 'I'll be happy to go with the officer, as I can speak French well enough !' 'Thank ye, young gentleman, thank ye,' said he, 'you'll do it as well as any man, I'm sure—only look sharp, if you please, and bring my gig with you !' So down the side we bundled into the cutter, and pulled straight for the brig, which had just hoisted French colours, not old 'three-patches,' of course, but the new Restoration flag.

"I overhauled her well as we got near, and a beautiful long schooner-model she was, with sharp bows, and a fine easy-run hull from stem to stern, but dreadfully dirty and spoilt with top-bulwarks, as if they meant to make her look as clumsy as possible ; while the brig-rig of her aloft, with the ropes hanging in bights and hitches, gave her the look of a hedge-parson on a race-horse ; at the same time, I counted six closed ports of a side, in her red streak, the exact breadth and colour of itself. Full of men, with a long gun, and schooner-rigged, she could have sailed round the Indiaman in a light breeze, and mauled her to any extent.

"They hove us a line out of the gangway at once, the mate got up her side as she rolled gently over, and I followed him : the scene that met our eyes as soon as we reached the deck, however, struck me a good deal on various accounts. We couldn't at first see where Mr Rollock and his party might be, for the shadow of a thick awning after the glare of the water, and the people near the brig's gangway ; but I saw two or three dark-faced, very French-like individuals, in broad-brimmed straw hats and white trousers, seemingly passengers ; while about twenty Kroomen and negroes, and as many seamen with unshaven chins, ear-rings, and striped frocks, were in knots before the longboat, turned keel up amidships, careless enough, to all appearance, about us. One of the passengers leant against the mainmast, with his arms folded over his broad chest, and his legs crossed, looking curiously at us as we came up ; his dark eyes half closed, the shadow of his hat down to his black moustache, and his shirt-collar open, showing a scar on his hairy breast ; one man, whom I marked for the brig's surgeon, beside him ; and another waiting for us near the bulwarks—a leathery-faced little fellow, with twinkling black eyes, and a sort of cocked hat fore-and-aft on his cropped head. '*Moi, monsieur,*' said he, slapping his hand on his breast as the mate looked about him, '*oui, je suis capitaine, monsieur.*'

"'Good-day, sir,' said Stebbing, 'we've just come aboard for our passengers—and the gig—sir, if you please.' 'Certainement, monsieur,' said the French skipper, bowing and taking a paper from his pocket, which he handed to the mate, 'I comprind, sare—monsieur le capitaine d' la frégate Anglaise, il nous demande nos—vat you call—*peppares*—voilà ! I have 'ad le honneur, messieurs, to be already sarch by vun off vos

crusoes—pour des *esclaves* ! vous imaginez *cela*, messieurs !' and hére the worthy Frenchman cast up his hands and gave a grin which seemed meant for innocent horror. '*Slaijs ! chez le brigantin Louis Bourbon, Capitaine Jean Duprez ? Non !*' said he, talking away like a windmill, 'de Marseilles à l'Isle de France, avec les vins choisis——' 'You mistake, monsieur,' said I, in French ; 'the ship is an Indiaman, and we have only come for our *friends*, who are enjoying your wine, I daresay, but we must——' 'Comment ?' said he, staring, '*what*, monsieur ? have de gotness to——'

"Here the moustached passenger suddenly raised himself off the mast, and made one stride between us to the bulwarks, where he looked straight out at the Indiaman, his arms still folded, then from us to the French master. He was a noble-looking man, with an eye I never saw the like of in anyone else, 'twas so clear, bold, and prompt—it actually went *into* you like a sword, and I couldn't help fancying him in the thick of a battle, with thousands of men and miles of smoke. 'Duprez,' said he, quickly, '*je vous le dis encore—debarquez ces misérables !—nous combattons !*' 'Then, mon ami,' said the surgeon, in a low, cool, determined tone, stepping up and laying a hand on his shoulder, '*aussi, nous couperons les ailes de l'Aigle, seulement !—Hush, mon ami, restrain this unfortunate madness of yours !—c'est bien mal-à-propos à présent !*' and he whispered something additional, on which the passenger fell back and leant against the mainmast as before. 'Ah !' said the French master in his own language, shaking his head, and giving his forehead a tap, '*le pauvre homme-là !* He has had a coup-de-soleil, messieurs, or rather of the *moon*, you perceive, from sleeping in its rays ! *Ma foi !*' exclaimed he, on my explaining the matter, '*c'est possible ?—we did suppose your boat proposed us the honour to visit, when evidently deterred by the excessive undulation !—My friends, resign yourselves to a misfort——*' 'Great heavens ! Mr Stebbing,' said I, 'the boat is *lost* !' 'By George ! what *will* the captain say, then !' replied he ; however as soon as I told him the sad truth, poor Stebbing, being a good-hearted fellow, actually put his hands to his face and sobbed.

"All this time the brig's crew were gabbling and kicking up a confounded noise about something they were at with the spare spars, and in throwing tarpaulins over the hatches ; for

it was fearfully dark, and going to rain heavy; the slight swell shone and slid up betwixt the two vessels like oil, and the clouds to south-westward had gathered up to a steep black bank, with round coppery heads, like smoke over a town on fire. 'Will you go down, messieurs,' said the Frenchman, politely, 'and taste my *vin de*——' 'No, sir,' said I, 'we must make haste off, or else—besides, by-the-way, we couldn't, for you've got all your hatches battened down!' 'Diable, so they are!' exclaimed he, '*par honneur*, gentlemen, I regret the occasion of—ha!' Just before, a glaring brassy sort of touch had seemed to come across the face of the immense cloud; and though everything, far and wide, was as still as death, save the creaking of the two ships' yards, it made you think of the last trumpet's mouth! But at this moment a dazzling flash leaped zigzag out of it, running along from one cloud to another, while the huge dark mass, as it were, tore right up, changing and turning it inside out like dust—you saw the sea far away under it, heaving from glassy blue into unnatural-like brown—when crash broke the thunder over our very heads, as if something had fallen out of heaven, then a long bounding roar. The mad French passenger stood up, walked to the bulwarks, and looked out with his hand over his eyes for the next; while the young mate and I tumbled down the brig's side without further to-do, and pulled fast for the ship, where we hardly got aboard before there was another wild flash, another tremendous clap, and the rain fell in one clash, more like stone than water, on sea and decks. For half an hour we were rolling and soaking in the midst of it, the lightning hissing through the rain, and showing it glitter; while every five minutes came a burst of thunder and then a rattle fit to split one's ears. At length, just as the rain began to slacken, you could see it lift bodily, the standing sheets of it drove right against our canvas and through the awnings—when we made out the French brig with her jib, topsails, and boom-mainsail full, leaning over as she clove through it before the wind.

"The squall burst into our wet topsails as loud as the thunder, with a flash almost like the lightning itself, taking us broad abeam; the ship groaned and shook for a minute ere gathering way and falling off, and when she rose and began to go plunging through the black surges no brig was to be

seen : every man on deck let his breath out almost in a cry, scarce feeling as yet but it was equal to losing sight for ever of our late shipmates, or the least hope of them. The passengers, ladies and all, crowded in the companion-hatch in absolute terror, every face aghast, without thinking of the rain and spray ; now and then the sulky crest of a bigger wave would be caught sight of beyond the bulwarks, as the sea rose with its green back curling over into white ; and you'd have said the shudder ran down into the cabin, at thought of seeing one or other of the lost boat's crew come weltering up from the mist and vanish again. I knew it was of no use, but I held on in the weather mizzen-rigging, and looked out to westward, against a wild break of light which the setting sun made through the troughs of the sea ; once and again I could fancy I saw the boat lift keel up, far off betwixt me and the fierce glimmer.

“ Oh, do you see them? *do* you not see it yet? ’ was passed up to me over and over, from one sharp-pitched voice to another ; but all I could answer was to shake my head. At last, one by one, they went below ; and after what had happened, I must say I could easily fancy what a chill, dreary-like, awful notion of the sea must have come for the first time on a landsman, not to speak of delicate young girls fresh from home, at sight of the drenched quarter-deck leaning bare down to leeward, the sleet and spray battering bleak against the round-house doors, where I had seen Miss Hyde led sobbing in, with her wet hair about her face ; then the ship driving off from where she had lost them, with her three strong lower masts aslant into the gale, ghastly-white and dripping—her soaked sheets of canvas blown grey and stiff into the rigging, and *it* strained taut as iron ; while you saw little of her higher than the tops, as the scud and the dark together closed aloft. Poor Miss Fortescue's mother was in fits below in her berth—the two watches were on the yards aloft, where no eye could see them, struggling hard to furl and reef ; so altogether it was a gloomy enough moment. I stayed awhile on deck, wrapped in a pea-coat, keeping my feet and hanging on, and thinking how right down in earnest matters *could* turn of a sudden. I wasn't remarkably thoughtful in these days, I daresay, but there did I keep, straining my eyes into the mist to see, I couldn't tell what, and repeat-

ing over and over again to myself these few words out of the Prayer-book, 'In the midst of life we are in death,' though scarce knowing what I said.

CHAPTER X

"HOWEVER, the Indiaman's officers and crew had work enough in managing her at present : after a sunset more like the putting out of him than anything else, with a flaring snuff and a dingy sort of smoke that followed, the wind grew from sou'-west into a regular long gale, that drove the tops of the heavy seas into the dead-lights astern, rising aft out of the dark like so many capes, with the snow drifting off them over the poop. At midnight, it blew great guns, with a witness; the ship, under storm staysails and close-reefed main-topsail, going twelve knots or more, when, as both the captain and mate reckoned, we were near St Helena on our present course, and to haul on a wind was as much as her spars were worth; her helm was put hard down, and we lay-to for morning, the ship drifting off bodily to leeward with the water. The night was quite dark, the rain coming in sudden spits out of the wind; you only heard the wet gale sob and hiss through the bare rigging into her storm canvas, when the lookout men ahead sung out, 'Land—land close to starboard!' 'Bless me, sir,' said the mate to the captain, 'it's the Rock—well that we *did*——' 'Hard up! hard up with the helm!' yelled the men again, 'it's a *ship*!'

"I ran to the weather main-chains and saw a broad black mass, as it were, rising high abeam, and seeming to come out from the black of the night, with a gleam or two in it which they had taken for lights ashore in the island. The *Seringapatam's* wheel was put up already, but she hung in the gale, doubtful whether to fall off or not; and the moment she *did* sink into the trough, we should have had a sea over her broadside fit to wash away men, boats, and all—let alone the other ship bearing down at twelve knots. 'Show the *head* of the *foretopmast-staysail*!' shouted I with all my strength to the forecastle, and up it went slapping its hanks to the blast—the Indiaman sprang round heeling to her ports on the next

sea, maintopsail before the wind, and the staysail down again. Next minute a large ship, with the foam washing over her cat-heads, and her martingale gear dripping under the huge white bowsprit, came lifting close past us—as black as shadows aloft, save the glimmer of her maintack to the lanterns aboard—and knot after knot of dim faces above her bulwarks shot by, till you saw her captain standing high in the mizzen-chains, with a speaking-trumpet. He roared out something or other through it, and the skipper sung out under both his hands, ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ in answer; but it turned out after that nobody knew what it was, unless it might be, as I thought, ‘*Where are you going?*’ The minute following, we saw her quarter-lanterns like two will-o’-the-wisps beyond a wave, and she was gone—a big frigate running under half her canvas, strong though the gale blew.

“‘Why, Mr Finch,’ said Captain Williamson, as soon as we had time to draw breath, ‘who was *that* bid show the fo’topmast-stays!; twan’t *you?*’ ‘No,’ said the mate, ‘I’d like to know who had the hanged impudence to give orders here without——’ ‘Well now, Finch,’ continued the old skipper, ‘I’m not sure but that was our only chance at the moment, sir; and if ’twas one of the men, why I’d pass it over, or even give him an extra glass of grog in a quiet way.’ No one could say who it was, however; and, for my part, the sight of the frigate made me still more cautious than before of letting out what Westwood and I were. In fact, I couldn’t help feeling rather uneasy, and I was glad to hear the superstitious old sailmaker whispering about how he feared there was no luck to be looked for ‘when drowned men and *ghostesses* began to work the ship!’

“The first streak of dawn was hardly seen, when a sail could be made out in it, far on our lee bow, which the officers supposed to be the frigate. Westwood and I, however, were of opinion it was the French brig, although by sunrise we lost sight of her again. Everyone in the cuddy talked of our unfortunate friends and their melancholy fate; even Ford and Winterton were missed, while old Mr Rollock had been the life of the passengers. But there was naturally still more felt for the poor girl Fortescue; it made all of us gloomy for a day or two; though the fresh breeze and the Indianman’s fast motion, after our wearisome spell of a calm, did a great deal

to bring things round again. Westwood was greatly taken up with my account of the brig and her people, both of us agreeing there was somewhat suspicious about her, though I thought she was probably neither more nor less than a slaver, and he had a notion she was after something deeper: what that might be, 'twas hard to conceive, as they didn't appear like pirates. One thing, however, we *did* conclude from the matter, that the brig couldn't have been at all inclined for visitors; and, in fact, there was little doubt but she *would* actually refuse letting the boat aboard, if they reached her; so in all likelihood our unhappy friends had been swamped on that very account, just as the squall came on. When this idea got about the ship, of course you may suppose neither passengers nor crew to have felt particularly amiable towards the French vessel; and if we had met her again, with any good occasion for it, all hands were much inclined to give her a right-down thrashing, if not to make prize of her as a bad character.

“‘Well, Tom,’ said I to Westwood one day, ‘I wish these good folks mayn’t be disappointed, but I do suspect this blessed mate of ours will turn out to have run us into some fine mess or other with his navigation! Did you notice how *blue* the sky looked this morning, over to eastward, compared with what it did just now where the sun *set*?’ ‘No,’ said Westwood, ‘not particularly; but what of that?’ ‘Why, in the *Iris*,’ replied I, ‘we used always to reckon that a sign, hereabouts, of our being near the *land*! Just you see now, to-morrow morning, if the dawn hasn’t a hazy yellow look in it before the breeze fails; in which case ’tis the African coast to a certainty! Pity these “Hyson Mundungo” men, as Jack calls them, shouldn’t have their eyes about them as well as on the log-slate. I daresay now,’ continued I, laughing, ‘you heard the first mate bothering lately about the great variation in the compass here? Well, what do you suppose was the reason of it, but that sly devil of a *kitmagar* shoving in his block for grinding curry under the feet of the binnacle every time he was done using it! I saw him get a kick one morning from the man at the wheel, who chanced to look down and notice him. Good solid iron it is, though painted and polished like marble, and the circumcised rascal unluckily considered the whole binnacle as a sort of second Mecca for security.’ ‘Hang

the fellow!’ said Westwood, ‘but I don’t see much to laugh at, Ned. Why, if you’re right, we shall all be soaked and fried into African fever before reaching the Cape, and we’ve had misfortunes enough already. Only think of an exquisite creature like Miss ——’ ‘Oh,’ interrupted I, fancying Master Tom began lately to show sufficient admiration for her, ‘betwixt an old humdrum and a conceited fool like that, what could you expect? All I say is, my dear parson, stand by for a pinch when it comes.’

“On going down to tea in the cuddy, we found the party full of spirits, and for the first time there was no mention of their lost fellow-passengers, except amongst a knot of cadets and writers rather elevated by the Madeira after dinner, who were gathered round the Reverend Mr Knowles, pretending to talk regretfully of his Yankee friend Mr Daniel Snout. ‘Yes, gentlemen,’ said the missionary, who was a worthy, simple-hearted person, ‘in spite of some uncouthness, and perhaps limited views, the result of defective education, he was an excellent man, I think.’ ‘Oh certainly, certainly,’ said a writer, looking to his friends, ‘and the one thing needful you spoke of just now, sir, I daresay he had it always in his eye, now?’ ‘Mixed, I fear,’ replied the missionary, ‘with some element of worldly feeling, for in America they *are* apt to make even the soul, as well as religious association, matter of commerce; but Mr Snout, I have reason to be assured, had the true welfare of India at heart. We had much interesting conversation on the subject.’ ‘Ah,’ said the sharp civilians, ‘he was fond of getting information, was poor Daniel. Was that why he asked you so many questions about the Hindoo gods, Mr Knowles?’ ‘He already possessed much general knowledge of their strange mythology himself,’ answered the missionary, ‘and I confess I was surprised at it, especially as he confessed to me that that gorgeous country, with its many boundless capabilities, should have occupied his thoughts more and more from boyhood, amidst the secular activity of modern life—even as it occurred unto myself!’

“Here the worthy man took off his large spectacles, gave them a wipe, and put them on again, while he finished his tea. ‘Before this deplorable dispensation,’ continued he again, ‘he was on the point of revealing to me a great scheme at once for the enlightenment, I believe, of that benighted land, and

for more lucrative support to those engaged in it. I fear, gentlemen, it was enthusiasm—but I have grounds for thinking that our departed friend has left in this vessel many packages of volumes translated into several dialects of the great Hindoo tongue—not omitting, I am convinced, the best of books.’ ‘Where?’ exclaimed several of the cadets, rather astonished. ‘*Well!* poor Snout can’t have been such a bad fellow, after all!’ ‘All hum!’ said the writer, doubtfully, ‘depend upon it. I should like now to have a peep at Jonathan’s bales!’ ‘I myself have thought also,’ said the missionary, ‘it would gratify me to look into his apartment—and were it permitted to use one or two of the volumes, I should cheerfully on our arrival in Bom——’ ‘Come along,’ said the cadets—‘let’s have a look!—shouldn’t wonder to see Daniel beside his lion yet, within! or hear “Guess I ain’t.”’ ‘My young friends,’ said the missionary, as we all went along the lighted passage, ‘such levity is unseemly’; and indeed the look of the state-room door, fastened outside, as the steward had left it before the gale came on, made the brisk cadets keep quiet till the lashing on it was unfastened—’twas so like breaking in upon a ghost. However, as it chanced, Mr Snout’s goods had got loose during her late roll, and heaped down to leeward against the door—so, whenever they turned the handle, a whole bundle of packages came tumbling out of the dark as it burst open, with a shower of small affairs like so many stones after them.

“‘What’s all this?’ exclaimed the cadets, stooping to look at the articles by the lamp-light, strewed as they were over the deck. The reverend gentleman stooped, too, stood straight, wiped his spectacles, and fixed them on his nose, then stooped again; at length one long exclamation of surprise broke out of his mouth. They were nothing but little ugly images done in earthenware, painted and gilt, and all exactly the same: the writer dived into a canvas package, and there was a lot of a different kind, somewhat larger and uglier. Everyone made free with a bale for himself, shouting out his discoveries to the rest. ‘I say, Smythe, this is Vishnu, it’s marked in the corner!’ ‘I say, Ramsay, here’s Brahma!’ ‘Ha! ha! ha! if *I* haven’t got Seeva!’ ‘I say, what’s this though?’ screamed a young lad, hauling at the biggest bale of all, while the missionary stood stock upright, a perfect picture

of bewilderment, 'Lo!' being all he could say. The lad had lighted on a gross or so of hideous gentlemen and ladies with three heads and five arms, packed nicely through each other in cotton, but inside the state-room. At this last prize, however, the poor missionary could stand it no longer. 'Oh! oh!' groaned he, clapping his hand to his head, and walking slowly off to his berth; while, as the truth gleamed on the cadets and us, we sat down on the deck amidst the spoil, and roared with laughter like to go into fits, at the unfortunate Yankee's scheme for converting India.* I had found the American by no means to my fancy as a berth-mate, so, after some dealings with the steward, I not only had secured a pretty comfortable berth for my poor friend Westwood, but one for myself. This had been, in short, soon afterwards managed, with the help of some shifting among the best-natured of the young cadets.

"'Well—hang me!' said a writer, as soon as he could speak, 'but this is a stroke beyond the Society for Diffusing Useful Knowledge!' 'Every man his own priest—ha! ha! ha!' shouted another. 'I say, Smythe,' sung out a cadet, 'just fancy—ha! ha! "D. Snout, Esquire, and Co."—ho! ho! ho! you know it's too rich to enjoy by ourselves. "Mythullogy store," Bombay, near the cathedral!' 'Cheap Brahmas, wholesale and retail—eh? families supplied!' 'By George! he's a genius lost!' said Smythe; 'but the parson needn't have broken with him for that—I shouldn't wonder, now, if they had joined partnership, but Daniel might have thought of mining all their clay heads with gunpowder and percussion locks, so that the missionary could have gone round afterwards and blown up heathenship by a touch!'

"The noise of all this soon brought along the rest of the gentlemen, and few could help laughing. When the thing got wind on deck, however, neither the old skipper nor the men seemed to like it much; what with the notion of the ship's being taken, as it were, by a thousand or two of ugly little imps and Pagan idols, besides bringing up a drowned

* It is here due to the credit of our friend the captain, who was not unusually imaginative for a sailor, to state, that this speculation, as a commercial one, is strictly and literally a *fact*, as the Anglo-Indian of Calcutta can probably testify. The bold and all but poetical catholicity of the idea could have been reached, perhaps, by the "progressing" American intellect alone, while Staffordshire, it is certain, furnished its realisation; the investment, it is nevertheless believed, proved eventually unprofitable.

man's concerns, and 'yawhawing,' as they said, into his very door—it was thought the best thing to have them all chucked overboard next morning.

"'Twas a beautifully fine night, clear aloft, and the moon rising large on our larboard bow, out of a delicate pale sort of haze, as the ship headed south'ard with the breeze; for I marked the haze particularly, as well as the colour of the sky, that lay high over it, like a deep-blue hollow going away down beyond, and filling up with the light. There was no living below for heat, and the showers of cockroaches that went whirring at the lamps, and marching, with their horrid feelers out, straight up your legs; so, fore and aft, the decks were astir with us all. Talk of moonlight on land! but even in the tropics you have to see it pouring right down, as it was then, the whole sky full of it aloft as the moon drew farther up, till it came raining, as it were, in a single sheet from one bend of the horizon to another, the water scarce rippling to the breeze, only heaving in long low swells that you heard just wash her bends; one track brighter than the rest, shining and glancing like a looking-glass drawn out, for a mile or so across our quarter, and the ship's shadow under her other bow. You saw the men far forward in her head, and clustered in a heap on the bowsprit-heel, enjoying it mightily, and looking out or straight aloft, as if to polish their mahogany faces, and get their bushy whiskers silvered; while the awnings being off the poop, the planks in it came out like so much ivory from the shade of the spanker, which sent down a perfect gush of light on everyone moving past. For the air, again, as all the passengers said, it was balmy, though for my part—perhaps it might be a fancy of mine—but now and then I thought it sniffed a little too much *that way* to be altogether pleasant in the circumstances.

"Of course, no sooner had I caught sight of Sir Charles Hyde than I looked for his daughter, and at last saw someone talking to a young lady seated near the after-gratings, with her head turned round seaward, whom it didn't require much guessing for me to name. Not having seen her at all since the affair of the boats, I strolled aft, when I was rather surprised to find that her companion was Tom Westwood, and they seemed in the thick of an interesting discourse. The instant I got near, however, they broke it off; the young lady turned

her head—and never, I'd swear, was woman's face seen fairer than I thought hers at that moment—when the bright moonlight, that had seemed trying to steal round her loose bonnet and peep in, fell straight down at once from her forehead to her chin, appearing, as it were, to dance in under her long eyelashes to meet her eyes: while one fall of her brown hair hung bright in it, glistening against the shadow round her cheek, that drew the charming line of her nose and lip as clear as the horizon on the sky! The very moment, in fact, that a bitter thought flashed into my mind, for to my fancy she looked vexed at seeing me, and a colour seemed mounting up to her cheek, even through the fairy sort of glimmer on it. *Could* Tom Westwood have been acting no more than the clerical near such a creature? and if a fellow like him took it in his head, what chance had *I*? The next minute, accordingly, she rose off her seat, and gave me a slight bow in answer to mine, and walked direct to the gallery stair, where she disappeared.

“‘We were talking of that unlucky adventure the other day,’ said Westwood, glancing at me, but rather taken aback, as I thought. ‘Ay?’ said I, carelessly. ‘Yes,’ continued he; ‘Miss Hyde had no idea you and I were particularly acquainted, and seems to think me a respectable clergyman, but I must tell you, Ned, she has rather a suspicious opinion of yourself!’ ‘Oh, indeed!’ said I, suddenly. ‘Fact, Ned,’ said he; ‘she even remembers having seen you before, somewhere or other—I hope, my dear fellow, it wasn’t on the stage?’ ‘Ha! ha! how amusing!’ I said, with the best laugh I could get up. ‘At any rate, Collins,’ he went on, ‘she sees through your feigned way of carrying on, and knows you’re neither griffin nor land-lubber, but a sailor, for I fancy this is not the first time the young lady has met with the cloth! *What* do you suppose she asked me now, quite seriously?’ ‘Oh, I couldn’t guess, of course,’ replied I, almost with a sneer; ‘pray don’t——’ ‘Why, she inquired what could be the design of one concealing his profession so carefully—and actually appearing to be on a secret understanding with some of the sailors! Directly after, she asked whether that brig mightn’t really have been a pirate, and taken off the poor general, Miss Fortescue, and the rest?’ ‘Ah,’ said I, coldly, ‘and if I might venture to ask, what did

you——'. 'Oh, of course,' replied Westwood, laughing, 'I could only hide my amusement and profess doubts, you know, Ned!' 'Very good joke, Mr Westwood,' thought I to myself, 'but at least you can't weather on *me* quite so innocently, my fine fellow! I didn't *think* it of him, after all! By Heaven, I did *not*!'

"'By-the-by, Collins,' exclaimed Westwood in a little, as he kept his eye astern, 'there's something away yonder on our lee quarter that I've been watching for these last ten minutes—what do you think it may be? Look! just in the tail of the moonshine yonder!' What it might be, I cared little enough at the time, but I did give a glance, and saw a little black dot, as it were, rising and falling with the long run of the water, apparently making way before the breeze. 'Only a bit of wood, I daresay,' remarked I; 'but whatever it is, at any rate, the drift will take it far to leeward of us, so you needn't mind.' Here we heard a steward come up and say to the first officer, who was waiting with the rest to take a lunar observation, that Captain Williamson had turned in unwell, but he wanted to hear when they found the longitude; accordingly they got their altitude, and went on making the calculations on deck. 'Well, steward,' said the mate, after a little humming and hawing, 'go down and tell the captain, in the meantime, about *five east*; but I think it's a good deal over the mark—say I'll be down myself directly.'

"'A long sight *below* the mark, rather!' said I, walking aft again, where Westwood kept still looking out for the black dot. 'You'll see it nearer now, Ned,' said he; 'more like a negro's head, or his hand, than a bit of wood—eh?' 'Curious!' I said; 'it lies well up for our beam still, *'spite* of the breeze. Must be a shark's back fin, I think, making for convoy.' In ten minutes longer the light swell in the distance gave it a lift up fair into the moonshine; it gleamed for a moment, and then seemed to roll across into the blue glimmer of the sea. 'I say, Collins,' said Westwood, gazing eagerly at it, 'tis more like a bottle, to *my* sight!' We walked back and forward, looking each time over the taffrail, till at length the affair in question could be seen dipping and creeping ahead in the smooth shining wash of the surface, just like to go bobbing across our bows and be missed to windward. 'Crossing our hause I *do* declare!—Hanged if *that* ain't fore-reaching on

us, with a witness !' exclaimed the two of us together : ' And a *bottle it is !*' said Westwood.

"I slipped down the poop-stair, and along to the fore-castle, where I told Jacobs ; when two or three of the men went out on the martingale-stays, with the bight of a line and a couple of blocks in it, ready to throw round this said floating oddity, and haul it alongside as it surged past. Shortly after, we had it safe in our hands ; a square-built old Dutchman it was, tight corked, with a red rag round the neck, and crusted over with salt — almost like one of Vanderdecken's messages home, coming up as it did from the wide glittering sea, of a tropical moonlight night, seven weeks or so after our leaving land. The men who had got it seemed afraid of their prize, so Westwood and I had no difficulty in smuggling it away below to our berth, where we both sat down on a locker and looked at one another. 'What poor wretch hove this overboard, I wonder, now?' said he ; 'I daresay it may have knocked about, God knows how long, since *his* affair was settled.' 'Why, for that matter, Westwood,' replied I, 'I fancy it's much more important to find there's a strong easterly current hereabouts just now.'*

"Here Westwood got a corkscrew, and pulled out the cork with a true parson-like gravity ; as we had expected, there was a paper tacked to it, crumpled up, and scrawled over in what we could only suppose was *blood*.

"'No. 20,' read he, 'what does that mean?' 'The twentieth bottle launched, perhaps,' said I, and he went on—'For God's sake, if you find this, keep to the south-west—we are going that way, we think—we've fallen amongst regular Thugs, I fear—just from the folly of these three griffins—(they're looking over my shoulder, though)—we are not ill-treated yet, but kept below and watched—yours in haste——' 'What this signature is I can't say for the life of me, Ned ; no date either.' 'Did the fellow think he was writing by post, I wonder?' said I, trying to make it out. 'By the powers, Westwood, though,' and I jumped up, 'that bottle *might* have come from the Pacific, 'tis true—but what if it were old Rollock, after all ! *Thugs*, did you say ? Why, I shouldn't wonder if the jolly old planter were on the hooks still. *That*

* Currents are designated from the direction they run *towards* ; winds, the quarter they blow *from*.

rascally brig!’ And accordingly, on trying the scrawl at the end, over and over, we both agreed that it was nothing but ‘T. ROLLOCK.’”

CHAPTER XI

THE next evening our friend the captain found his fair audience by the taffrail increased to a round dozen, while several of the gentlemen passengers lounged near, and the chief officer divided his attention between the gay group of ladies below and the “fanning” maintopsail high up, with its corresponding studding-sail hung far out aloft to the breeze; the narrative having by this time contracted a sort of professional interest, even to his matter-of-fact taste, which enabled him to enjoy greatly the occasional glances of sly humour directed to him by his superior, for whom he evidently entertained a kind of admiring respect, that seemed to be enhanced as he listened. As for the commander himself, he related the adventures in question with a spirit and vividness of manner that contributed to them no small charm; amusingly contrasted with the cool, dry, indifferent sort of gravity of countenance amidst which the keen grey seawardly eye, under the peak of the naval cap, kept changing and twinkling as it seemed to run through the experience of youth again—sometimes almost approaching to an undeniable wink. The expression of it at this time, however, was more serious, while it appeared to run along the dotted reef-band of the mizzen-topsail above, as across the entry in a log-book, and as if there were something interesting to come.

“Well, my dear captain,” asked his matronly relative, “what comes next? You and your friend had picked up a—a—what was it *now*!”

“Ah! I remember, ma’am,” said the naval man, laughing; “the bottle—that was where I was. Well, as you may conceive, this said scrap of penmanship in the bottle *did* take both of us rather on end; and for two or three minutes Westwood and I sat staring at each other and the uncouth-looking fist, in an inquiring sort of way, like two cocks over a beetle. Westwood, for his part, was doubtful of its being the planter’s

writing at all ; but the whole thing, when I thought of it, made itself as clear to me, so far, as two half-hitches, and so the angrier I was at myself for being *done*—by a frog-eating bloody-politeful set of Frenchmen like these. Could we only have clapped eyes on the villanous thieving craft at the time, by Jove ! if I wouldn't have manned a boat from the Indiaman, leave or no leave, and boarded her in another fashion. But where they were now, what they meant, and whether we should ever see them again, Heaven only knew. For all we could say, indeed, something strange might have turned up at home in Europe—a new war, old Boney got loose once more, or what not ; and I could scarce fall asleep for guessing and bothering over the matter, as restless as the first night we cruised down the Channel in the old *Pandora*.

“Early in the morning-watch a sudden stir of the men on deck woke me, and I bundled up in five minutes' time. But it was only the second mate setting them to wash decks, and out they came from all quarters, yawning, stretching themselves, and tucking up their trousers, as they passed the full buckets lazily along ; while a couple of boys could be seen hard at work to keep the head-pump going, up against the grey sky over the bow. However, I was so anxious to have the first look-out ahead, that I made a bold push through the thick of it for the bowsprit, where I went out till I could see nothing astern of me but the Indiaman's big black bows and figure-head, swinging as it were round the spar I sat upon, with the spread of her canvas coming dim after me out of the fog, and a lazy snatch of foam lifting to her cut-water as the breeze died away.

“The sun was just beginning to rise ; ten minutes before it had been almost quite dark ; there was a mist on the water, and the sails were heavy with dew ; when a circle began to open round us, where the surface looked as smooth and dirty as in a dock, the haze seeming to shine through, as the sunlight came sifting through it, like silver gauze. You saw the big red top of the sun glare against the water-line, and a wet gleam of crimson came sliding from one smooth blue swell to another ; while the back of the haze astern turned from blue to purple, and went lifting away into vapoury streaks and patches. All of a sudden the ship came clear out aloft and on the water, with her white streak as bright

as snow, her fore-royal and truck gilded, her broad foresail as red as blood, and every face on deck shining as they looked ahead, where I felt like a fellow held up on a toasting fork, against the fiery wheel the sun made ere clearing the horizon. Two or three strips of cloud melted in it like lumps of sugar in hot wine; and after overhauling the whole seaboard round and round, I kept straining my eyes into the light, with the notion there was something to be seen in that quarter, but to no purpose; there wasn't the slightest sign of the brig or any other blessed thing. What struck me a little, however, was the look of the water just as the fog was clearing away; the swell was sinking down, the wind fallen for the time to a dead calm; and when the smooth face of it caught the light full from aloft, it seemed to come out all over long-winding wrinkles and eddies, running in a broad path, as it were, twisted and woven together, right into the wake of the sunrise.

"When I came inboard from the bowsprit, big Harry and another grumpy old salt were standing by the bitts, taking a forecastle observation, and gave me a squint, as much as to ask if I had come out of the east, or had been trying to pocket the flying-jibboom. '*D'* you notice anything strange about the *water* at all?' I asked in an offhand sort of way, wishing to see if the men had remarked aught of what I suspected. The old fellow gave me a queer look out of the tail of his eye, and the ugly man seemed to be measuring me from head to foot. 'No, sir,' said the first, carelessly; 'can't say as how I does'; while Harry coolly commenced sharpening his sheath-knife on his shoe. 'Did you ever hear of currents hereabouts?' said I to the other man. 'Hereaway!' said he. 'Why, bless ye, sir, it's impossible as I *could* ha' heerd tell on sich a thing,' 'cause, ye see, sir, there ain't none so far out at sea, sir—al'ays axin' *your* parding, ye know, sir!' while he hitched up his trousers and looked aloft, as if there were somewhat wrong about the jib-halliards.

"The Indiaman by this time had quite lost steerage-way and came sheering slowly round, broadside to the sun, while the water began to glitter like a single sheet of quicksilver, trembling and swelling to the firm edge of it far off; the pale blue sky filling deep aloft with light, and a long white haze

growing out of the horizon to eastward. I kept still looking over from the fore-chains with my arms folded, and an eye to the water on the starboard side, next the sun, where, just a fathom or two from the bright copper of her sheathing along the water-line, you could see into it. Every now and then little bells and bubbles, as I thought, would come up in it, and break short of the surface; and sometimes I fancied the line of a slight ripple, as fine as a rope-yarn, went turning and glistening round one of the ship's quarters, across her shadow. Just then the old sailor behind me shoved his face over the bulwark, too, all warts and wrinkles, like a ripe walnut-shell, with a round knob of a nose in the middle of it, and seemed to be watching to see it below, when he suddenly squirted his tobacco-juice as far out as possible alongside, and gave his mouth a wipe with the back of his tarry yellow hand; catching my eye in a shamefaced sort of way, as I glanced first at him and then at his floating property.

"I leant listlessly over the rail, watching the patch of oily yellow froth as it floated quietly on the smooth face of the water; till all at once I started to observe that beyond all question it had crept slowly away past our starboard bow, clear of the ship, and at last melted into the glittering blue brine. The two men noticed my attention, and stared along with me; while the owner of the precious cargo himself kept looking after it wistfully into the wake of the sunlight, as if he were a little hurt; then aloft and round about, in a puzzled sort of way, to see if the ship hadn't perhaps taken a sudden sheer to port. 'Why, my man,' I said, meeting his oyster-like old sea-eye, 'what's the reason of *that*?—perhaps there is some current or other here, after all, eh?' Just as he meant to answer, however, I noticed his watchmate give him a hard shove in the ribs with his huge elbow, and a quick screw of his weather top-light, while he kept the lee one doggedly fixed on myself. I accordingly walked slowly aft as if to the quarterdeck, and came round the long-boat again, right abreast of them.

"Harry was pacing fore and aft with his arms folded, when his companion made some remark on the heat, peering all about him, and then right up into the air aloft. 'Well then, shipmate,' said Harry, dabbing his handkerchief back into his

tarpaulin again, 'I've seen worse, myself—ownly, 'twas in the Bight o' Benin, look ye—an' afore the end o' it, d'ye see, we hove o'erboard nine o' a crew, let alone six dozen odds of a cargo!' 'Cargo!' exclaimed his companion, in surprise. 'Ay, black *passengers* they was, ye know, old ship!' answered the ugly rascal, coolly; 'an' I tell ye what it is, Jack, I never sails yet with passengers aboard, but some'at bad turned up in the end—al'ays one or another on 'em's got a foul turn in his conscience, ye see! I say, mate,' continued he, looking round, 'didn't ye note that 'ere longshore looking customer as walked aft just now, with them soft quest'ns o' his about——' 'Why,' says Jack, 'it's him Jacobs and the larboard watch calls the Green Hand, an' a blessed good joke they has about him, to all appearance, but they keeps it pretty close.' 'Close, do they,' growled Harry, 'I doesn't like the cut of his jib, I tell ye, shipmate! Jist you take my word for it, that 'ere fellow's done some'at bad at home, or he's bent on some'at bad afloat—it's all one! Don't ye mark how he keeps boxhaulin' and skulking fore an' aft, not to say looking out to wind'ard every now an' again, as much as he expected a sail to leave in sight?' 'Well, I'm blowed, but you're right, Harry!' said the other, taking off his hat to scratch his head, thoughtfully. 'Ay, and what's more,' went on Harry, 'it's just comed ath'art me as how I've clapped eyes on the chap somewheres or other afore this—if I don't think it was amongst a gang o' Spanish pirates I saw tried for their lives, and let off, in the Havanney!'

"'Thank you, my man,' thought I, as I leant against the booms on the other side. 'Did you?—a wonder it wasn't in the Old Bailey, which would have been more possible, though less romantic—seeing in the Havannah I never was!' The curious thing was that I began to have a faint recollection, myself, of having seen this same cross-grained beauty, or heard his voice, before; though where and how it was I couldn't for the life of me say at the moment.

"'Lor' bless us, Harry!' faltered out the old sailor, 'ye don't mean it!—sich a young, soft-looking shaver, too!' 'Them smooth-skinned sort o' coves is kimmonly the worst, mate,' replied Harry; 'for that matter ye may be quite sure he's got his chums aboard—an' how does *we* know but the ship's *sold*, from stem to starn? There's that 'ere black-

avizzed parson, now, and one or two more aft—cuss me if that 'ere feller smells brine for the first time! An' as for this here Bob Jacobs o' yours, blow me if there ain't over many of his kind in the whole larboard watch, Jack! A man-o'-war's-man's al'ays a blackguard out on a man-o'-war, look-ye!' 'Why, bless me, shipmate,' said Jack, lowering his voice, 'by that recknin', a man don't know his friends in this here craft! The sooner we gives the mate a hint the better, to my thinking?' 'No, blow me, no, Jack,' said Harry, 'keep all fast, or ye'll kick up a worse nitty, old boy! Just you hould on till ye see what's to turn up—ownly stand by and look out for squalls, that's all! There's the skipper laid up below in his berth, I hears—and to my notions, that 'ere mate of ours is no more but a blessed soldier, with his navigation an' his head-work, an' be blowed to him: where's he runned the ship, I'd like to know, messmate!' 'Well, strike me lucky if I'm fit to guess!' answered Jack, gloomily. 'No, s' help me Bob, if he knows hisself!' said Harry. 'But here's what I says, anyhow—if so be we heaves in sight of a pirate, or bumps ashore on a ileyand i' the dark, shiver my tawsels if I doesn't have a clip with a handspike at that 'ere soft-sawderin' young blade in the straw hat!' 'Well, my fine fellow,' thought I, 'many thanks to you again, but I certainly shall look out for *you*!'

"All this time I couldn't exactly conceive whether the sulky rascal really suspected anything of the kind, or whether he wasn't in fact sounding his companion, and perhaps others of the crew, as to how far they would go in case of an opportunity for mischief; especially when I heard him begin to speculate if 'that 'ere proud ould beggar of a naboo, aft yonder, musn't have a sight o' gould and jowels aboard with him! Why, for the matter o' that, mate,' continued he, 'I doesn't signify the twinklin' of a marling-spike, mind ye, what lubberly trick they sarves this here craft, so be ownly ye can get anyhow ashore, when all's done! It's nouter ship-law nor shore-law, look ye, mate, as houlds good on a lonely dazart!' 'Ay, ay, true enough, bo', said the other, 'but what o' that? there ain't much signs of a dazart, I reckon, in this here blue water!' 'Ho!' replied Harry, rather scornfully, 'that's 'cause you blue-water, long-v'yage chaps isn't up to them, brother. There's you and that 'ere joker in the striped slops,

Jack, chaffing away over the side jist now about a current—confounded sharp he thinks hisself, too—but d'ye think Harry Foster ain't got his weather-eye open? For my part, I thinks more of the streak o' haze yonder-away, right across the starboard bow, nor all the currents in——' 'Ay, ay,' said Jack, stretching out again to look, 'the heat, you means?' 'Heat!' exclaimed the ugly topman, 'heat be blowed! Hark ye, mate, it *may* be a strip o' cloud, no doubt, or the steam over a sand-bank; but so be the calm lasts so long, and you sees that 'ere streak again by sundown with a touch o' yallow in't——'

"'What—*what*—shipmate?' asked Jack, breathless with anxiety. 'Then it's the black coast iv Africay, and *no* mistake,' said Harry. 'And what's more,' continued the fellow, coolly, after taking a couple of short turns, 'if there *be's* a current, why look ye, it'll set dead in to where the land lays—an' I'm blessed if there's one aboard, breeze or no breeze, as is man enough for to take her out o' the suck of a Africane current.' 'The Lord be with us!' exclaimed the other sailor, in alarm, 'what's to be done, Harry, bo'; when do you mean for to let them know aft?' 'Why, maybe I'm wrong, ye know, old ship,' said Harry, 'an' a man mustn't go for to larn his betters, ye know; by this time half o' the watch has a notion on it, at any rate. There's Dick White, Jack Jones, Jim Sidey, an' a few more Wapping men, means to stick together in case o' accidents; so Jack, man, ye needn't be in sich an a taking. What the' (here he came out with a regular string of topgallant oaths), 'when you finds a good chance shoved into your fist, none o' your doin', ain't a feller to haul in the slack of it 'cause he's got a tarry paw and ships before the mast? I tell ye what it is, old ship, 'tain't the first time you an' me's been cast away, an' I doesn't care the drawin' of a rope-yarn, in them 'ere latitudes, if I'm cast away again. Hark ye, ould boy: grog to the mast-head, a grab at the passengers' wallibles, when they ha'n't no more use for 'em, in course; and the pick of the ladies, jist for the takin' o' them ashore!'

"'Lord love ye, Harry, belay there!' said Jack; 'what's the good o' talkin' on what ain't like to be?' 'Less like things turn up,' said Harry. 'More by token, if I hasn't pitched upon my fancy lass a'ready; an' who knows, old ship,

but you marries a naboob's darter yet, and gets yourself shoved all square, like a riglar hare, into his heestate, as they calls it? For my part, I've more notion of the *maid*! An' it'll go hard with me if we doesn't manage to haul that 'ere mishynar parson safe ashore on the strength of it.' 'God bless ye, Harry,' answered Jack, somewhat mournfully, 'I'm twice spliced already!' 'Third time's lucky, though,' replied Harry, with a chuckle, as he walked towards the side again and looked over; the rest of the watch being gathered on the other bow, talking and laughing; the passengers beginning to appear on the poop, and the Scotch second mate standing up aft on the taffrail, feeling for a breath of wind. The big topman came slowly back to his companion, and leant himself on the spars again. 'Blowed if I don't think you're right, mate,' said he, 'you and that 'ere lawyer. You'd a'most say there's a ripple round her larboard bow just now, sure enough—like she were broadside on to some drift or another. Hows'ever, that's neither here nor there; for my part, I sets more count by the look o' the sky to east'ard; an' be blowed, shipmate, if that same yonder don't make me think of *woods*.' 'Well,' said Jack, '*I* goes by sunrise, messmate, an' I didn't like it overmuch myself, d'ye see! That 'ere talk o' yours, Harry, consarnin' dazarts and what not—why, bless me, it's all my eye—this bout, at any rate—seein' as how, if we doesn't have a stiff snuffler out o' that very quarter afore twenty-four hours is over, you call me lubber!'

"'Ho, ho! old salt,' chuckled Harry, 'none o' them saws holds good hereaway; if it's the coast of Africay, mate, *two* watches 'll settle our hash in them longitudes, without going the length o' *six*! Ha'n't I knocked about the bloody coast of it six weeks at a time, myself, let alone livin' as many months in the woods?—so I knows the breedin' of a turnady a cussed sight too well, not to speak on the way the land-blink looms afore you sights it!'

"'Lived in them there woods, did ye?' inquired Jack. 'Ay, bo', an' a rum rig it was too, sure enough,' said Harry; 'the very same time I told you on, i' the Bight o' Benin.' 'My eye,' exclaimed the other, 'a man never knows what he may come to. Let's into the rights of it, Harry, can't ye, afore eight bells strikes?'

"'Woods!' said Harry, 'I b'lieve ye, ould ship. I see'd

enough o' woods, that time, arter all—and 'twan't that long agone, either—I'll not say *how* long, but it wa'n't *last* v'yage. A sharp, clinker-built craft of a schooner she wor; I'm not goin' to give ye her right name, but they called her the *Lubberhater**—an' if there wa'n't all sorts on us aboard, it's blaming ye—an' a big double-jinted man-eatin' chap of a Yankee was our skipper, as sly as slush—more by token, he had a wart alongside o' one eye as made him look two ways at ye—Job Price by name—an' arter he'd made his fortin, I heard he's took up a teetotal chapel afloat on the Missishippey. She'd got a strapping long nose, that 'ere schooner, so, my boy, we leaves everything astarn, chase or race, I promise ye; an' as for a blessed ould ten-gun brig what kept a-cruising thereaway, why, we jest got used to her, like, and al'ays lowers our mainsail afore takin' the wind of her, by way o' good-bye, quite perlite. Blowed if it warn't rum, though, for to see the brig's white figger'ed over the swell, rollin' under a cloud o' canvas, stens'ls crowded out alow an' aloft, as she jogged arter us. Then she'd haul her wind an' fire a gun, an' go beating away up in chase of some other craft, as caught the chance for runnin' out whenever they sees the *Lubberhater* well to sea—why, s' help me Bob, if the traders on the coast didn't pay Job Price half-a-dozen blacks apiece every trip, jist for to play that 'ere dodge. At last, one time, not long after I joined the craft, what does he do but nigh-hand loses her an' her cargo, all owin' to reckonin' over much on this here traverse. Out we comes one night in the tail of a squall, an' as soon as it clears, there sure enough we made out the brig, hard after us, as we thinks—so never a rag more Job claps on, 'cause two of his friends, ye see, was jist outside the bar in the Noon river. Well, very soon the cruiser begins to overhaul us, as one gaff-taups'l wouldn't do, nor yet another, till the flying-jib and bonnets made her walk away from them in right 'arnest—when slap comes a long-shot that that took the foretopmast out of us in a twinkling. So when the moonlight comed out, lo an' behold, instead o' the brig's two masts stiff and straight against the haze, there was *three* spanking sticks all ataunto, my boy, in a fine new sloop-o'-war as had fresh come on the station—the *Iris*,

* Query—Liberator?

they called her—and a fast ship she wor. But all said and done, the schooner had the heels of her in aught short of a reef-taups'l breeze—though, as for the other two, the sloop-o'-war picked off both on 'em in the end.'

"At this point of the fellow's account, I, Ned Collins, began to prick up my ears, pretty sure it was the dear old *Iris* he was talking of; and, thought I, 'Oho, my mate, we shall have you directly—listening's all fair with a chap of this breed.'

" 'Well,' said he, ' 'twas the next trip after that, we finds the coast clear, as commonly was—for, d'ye see, they couldn't touch us if so be we hadn't a slave aboard—in fact, we heerd as how the cruiser was up by Serry Lony, and left some young leftenant or other on the watch with a sort o' lateen-rigged tender. A precious raw chap he was, by all accounts—and, sure enough, there he kept plying off and on, inshore, 'stead of out of sight to seaward till the craft would make a bolt; an' as soon as ye dropped an anchor, he'd send a boat aboard with a reefer, to ax if ye'd got slaves in the hold. In course, ye know, Job Price sends back a message, "palm-ile an' iv'ry, an' Gould if we can"—h'ists the Portingee colours, brings up his Portingee papers, and makes the Portingee stoo'rd skipper for the spell—but anyhow, bein' no less nor three slavers in the mouth of the Bonny river at the time, why, he meant to show fight if need be, and jest manhandle the young navy sprig to his heart's content. Hows'ever, the second or third night, all on a sudden we found he'd sheered off for a decency's sake, as it might be, an hour or two afore we'd began to raft off the niggers. Well, mate, right in the midst of it there comes sich a fury of a turnady off the land, as we'd to slip cable and run fair out to sea after the other craft what had got sooner full—one on 'em went ashore in sight, an' we not ninety blacks aboard yet, with barely a day's water stowed in.

" 'The next morning, out o' sight of land, we got the sea-breeze, and stood in again under everything, till we made Fernandy Po ileyand, three leagues off, or thereby, an' the two ebony-brigs beating out in company, so the skipper stands over across their course for to give them a hail, heaves to and pulls aboard the nearest, where he stays a good long spell and drinks a stiff glass, as ye may fancy, afore partin'. Back

comes Job Price in high glee, and tould the mate as how that mornin' the brigs had fell foul o' the man-o'-war tender, bottom up, an' a big Newfoundling dog a-howlin' on the keel—no doubt she'd turned the turtle in that 'ere squall—more by token, he brought the dog alongst with him in a present. So away we filled again to go in for the Bonny river, when the breeze fell, and shortly arter there we was all three dead becalmed, a couple o' miles betwixt us, sticking on the water like flies on glass, an' as hot, ye know, as blazes—the very moral o' this here. By sundown we hadn't a drop of water, so the skipper sent to the nearest brig for some; but strike me lucky if they'd part with a bucketful for love, bein' out'ard bound. As the Spanish skipper said, 'twas either hard dollars or a stout nigger, and t' other brig said the same. A slight puff o' land-wind we had in the night, though next day 'twas as calm as ever, and the brigs farther off—so by noon, my boy, for two blessed casks, if Job Price hadn't to send six blacks in the boat. Shorter yarn, Jack, but the calm held that night too, and blowed if the brigs would sell another breaker—what we had we couldn't spare to the poor devils under hatches, and the next day, why they died off like rotten sheep, till we hove the last on 'em o'board; and frighterful enough it was, mind ye, for to see about fifty sharks at work all round the schooner at once, as long as it lasted.

“Well, in the arternoon we'd just commenced squabbling aboard amongst ourselves, round the dreg water, or whether to board one o' the brigs and have a fair fight, when off come a bit of a breeze, betwixt the two high peaks on Fernandy Po, both the brigs set stensails, and begins slipping quietly off—our skipper gived orders to brace after them, and clear away the long gun amidships; but all on a suddent we made out a lump of a brig dropping down before it round the ileyand, which we knowed her well enough for a Bristol craft as had lost half her hands up the Callebar, in the gould an' iv'ry trade. Down she comed, wonderful fast for the light breeze, if there hadn't been one o' yer currents besides off the ileyand, till about half-a-mile away she braces up, seemingly to sheer across it and steer clear of us. Out went our boat, an' the skipper bids every man of her crew to shove a short cutlash inside his trousers. Says he, “I guess we'll first speak 'em fair, but if we don't ha' water enough, it'll be 'tarnall queer, that's all,”

says he—an' Job was a man never swore, but he *looked* mighty *bad* that time, I must say; so we outs oars and pulls right aboard the trader, without answerin' ever a hail, when up the side we bundled on deck, one arter the other, mad for a drink, and sees the master with five or six of a crew, all as white as ghostesses, and two or three Kroomen, besides a long-legged young feller a-sittin' and kicking his feet over the kimpanion hatch, with a tumblerful o' grog in his fist, as fresh to all seemin' as a fish, like a supper-cargo or some'at o' the sort, as them craft commonly has.

““What schooner's that?” axes the master, all abroad like; an' says Job—says he, out o' breath, “Never you mind; I guess you'll let's have some water, for we wants it mighty keen!” “Well,” says the other, shaking his head, “I'm afeared we're short ourselves—anyhow,” says he, “we'll give ye a dipper the piece”—and accordingly they fists us along a dozen gulps, hand over hand. “'Twon't do, I guess, mister,” says our skipper; “we wants a cask!” Here the master o' the brig shakes his head again, and guv a look to the young long-shore-like chap aft, which sings out as we couldn't have no more for love nor money—an' I see Captin Price commence for to look savitch again, and feel for the handle on his cutlash. “Rather you'd ax iv'ry or gould-dust!” sings out the supper-cargo; “hows'ever,” says he, “as ye've taken sich a fancy to it, short o' water as we is, why a fair exchange ain't no robbery,” says he: “you wants water, an' we wants hands; haven't ye a couple o' niggers for to spare us, sir, by way of a barter now?” he says. “Well, mate, I'll be blowed if I ever see a man turn so wicked fur'ous as Job Price turns at this here, an says he, through his teeth, “If ye'd said a nigger's nail-parin', I couldn't done it, so it's no use talkin'.” “Oh come, captin,” says the young fellow, wonderful angshis-like, “say *one*, jist—it's all on the quiet, ye know. Bless me, captin,” says he, “I'd do a deal for a man in a strait, 'tickerly for yerself—an' I think we'd manage with a single hand more. I'll give ye two casks and a bag o' gould dust for *one* black, and we'll send aboard for him just now, ourselves!” “No!” roars Job Price, walkin' close up to him; “ye've riz me, ye cussed Britisher ye, an' I tell ye we'll *take* what we wants!” “No jokes though, captin!” says the feller; “what's *one* to a whole raftful I heerd of ye

shipping?" "Go an' ax the sharks, ye beggar!" says the skipper; "here, my lads!" says he, an' makes a grab at the other's throat, when slap comes a jug o' rum in his eye-lights, and the young chap ups fist in quick-sticks, and drops him like a cock, big as he was. By that time, though, in a twinklin' the master was flat on deck, and the brig's crew showed no fight—when, lo an' behold, my boy, up bundles a score o' strapping man-o'-war's-men out of the cabing. One or two on us got a cut about the head, an' my gentleman supper-cargo claps a pistol to my ear from aft, so we knocked under without more to-do. In five minutes' time every man jack of us had a seizing about his wrists and lower pins; and says Job Price, in a giving-up sort o' v'ice, "You're too cust spry for playin' jokes on, I calc'late, squire," he says. "Jokes!" says the young feller, "why, it's no joke—in course you knows me?" "Niver see'd ye atween the eyes afore," says Job, "but don't bear no malice, mister, now." "That's it," says the t'other, lookin' at the schooner again, "no more I does, so jist think a bit; ha'n't you really a nigger or so aboard o' ye—if it was jist one?" "Squash the one!" says Job, shakin' his head nellicholly like—an' "Sorry for it," says the chap, "'cause ye see I'm the leftenant belongin' to the *Irish*, an' I can't titch yer schooner if so be ye ha'n't a slave aboard." "Lawk a'mighty!—no!" sings out Job Price, 'cause, bein' half-blinded he couldn't ha' noted the lot o' man-o'-war's-men sooner. "But I *can*," says the other, "for piracy, ye see; an' what's more," he says, "there's no help for it now, I'm afeard, mister what-they-call-ye."

"Well, mate, after that ye may fancy our skipper turns terrible down in the mouth; so without a word more they parbuckles us all down below into the cabin—an' what does this here leftenant do but he strips the whole lot, rigs out as many of his men in our duds, hoists out a big cask o' water on the brig's far side, and pulls round for the schooner—hissself togged out like the skipper, and his odd hands laid down in the boat's bottom.' You won't wonder at my being highly amused with the fellow's yarn, since the fact was that it happened to be one of my own adventures in the days of the *Iris*, two or three years before, when we saw a good many scenes together, far more wild and stirring, of course, in the

thick of the slave trade ; but really the ugly rascal described it wonderfully well.

“ ‘Well,’ said Harry, ‘I gets my chin shoved up in the starn-windy, where I seed the whole thing, and tould the skipper accordently. The schooner’s crew looked out for the water like so many oysters in a tub ; the leftenant jumps up the side with his men after him, an’ not so much as the cross of two cutlashes did we hear afore the onion-jack flew out a-peak over her mains’l. In five minutes more, the schooner fills away before the breeze, and begins to slide off in fine style after the pair o’ brigs, as was nigh half-hull down to seaward by this time. There we was, left neck and heel below in the trader, and he hauled up seemin’ly for the land ; an’ arter a bit, says the skipper to me, “ Foster, my lad, I despise this way o’ things,” says he ; “ ain’t there no way on gettin’ clear ? ” “ Never say die, captin ! ” I says ; an’ says he, “ I calc’late they left considerable few hands aboard ? ” “ None but them sleepy-like scum o’ iv’ry men,” I says, but be blowed if I see’d what better we was, till down comes a little nigger cabin-boy for some’at or other, with a knife in his hand. Job fixes his eye on him—I’ve heerd he’d a way in his eye with niggers as they couldn’t stand—an’ says he, soft-sawderin’ like, “ Come here, will ye, my lad, an’ give us a drink,” so the black come for’ard with a pannikin, one foot at a time, an’ he houlds it out to the skipper’s lips—for, d’ye see, all on us had our flippers lashed behind our backs. “ Now,” says he, “ thankee, boy—look in atwixt my legs, and ye’ll find a dollar.” With that, jest as the boy stoops, Job Price ketches his neck fast betwixt his two knees, an’ blowed if he didn’t jam them harder, grinning all the time, till down drops the little black throttled on the deck. “ That’s for thankin’ a nigger ! ” says he, lookin’ as savitch as a fiend, and got the knife in his teeth, when he turned to and sawed through the seizing round my wrists—an’ in course I sets every man clear in quick-sticks. “ Now ! ” says Job, looking round, “ the quicker the better—that cussed lubber-ratin’ hound’s got my schooner, but maybe, my lads, this here iv’ry man’ll pay expenses : if I’m made out a pirate, I’ll arn the name ! ”

“ ‘Well, we squints up the hatchway, and see’d a young midshipman a-standing with his back to us, watching the

brig's crew at the braces, an' a pistol in one hand—when all at once our skipper slips off his shoes, runs up the stair as quiet as a cat, an' caught the end of a capstan-bar as lay on the scuttle. With that down he comes crash on the poor fellow's scull from aft, and brained him in a moment. Every man of us got bloody-minded with the sight, so we scarce knowed what we did, ye know, mate, afore all hands o' them was gone—how, I ain't goin' for to say, nor the share as one had in it more nor another. The long an' the short on it was, we run the brig by sun-down in amongst the creeks up the Camaroons river, thinkin' to lie stowed away close thereabouts till all wor cold. Hows'ever, they kicked up the devil's delight about a piracy, and the sloop-o'-war comes back shortly, when night an' day there was that young shark of a lieutenant huntin' arter us, as sharp as a marling-spike—we dursn't come down the river nohow, till what with a bad conscience, fogs, and sleepin' every night within stink o' them blasted muddy mangroves an' bulrushes together, why, mate, the whole ten hands died off one arter the other in the fever—leaving ownly me an' the skipper. Job Price was like a madman over the cargo, worth good knows how many thousand dollars, as he couldn't take out; but for my part, I gets the brig's punt one night and sculls myself ashore, and off like a hare into the bush by moonlight. No use, ye know, for to say what rum chances I meets with in the woods, livin' up trees and the like for fear o' illiphants, serpents, an' high-annies; but, blow me, if I didn't think the farther ye went aloft, the more monkeys an' parrykeets you roused out, jabberin' all night so as a feller couldn't close an eye—an' as for the sky, be blowed if I ever once sighted it. So, d'ye see, it puts all notions o' fruits an' flowers out o' my head, an' all them jimmy-jessamy sort o' happy-go-lucky yarns about barbers' ileyands and shipherdresses what they used for to spell out o' dicshinars at school—all gammon, mate!

“‘Lor' love ye, no, surely,' said Jack; ‘it's in the Bible!’

“‘Ay, ay,' said Harry, ‘that's arter ye've gone to Davy Jones, no doubt; but I've been in the Southsy ileyands since, myself, an' be blowed if it's much better there! Hows'ever, still anon, I took a new fancy, an' away I makes for the river, in sarch of a nigger villache, as they calls 'em; and sure enough I warn't long ere right I plumps in the midst on a lot o' cane

huts amongst trees. But sich a shine and a nitty as I kicks up, ye see, bein' half-naked, for all the world like a wild man o' the woods, an' for a full hour I has the town to myself, so I hoists my shirt on a stick over the hut I took, by way of a flag o' truce, an' at last they all begins for to swarm in again. Well, ye see, I knowed the ways o' the natifs thereabouts pretty well, an' what does I do but I'd laid myself flat afore an ugly divvle of a wooden himmache, as stood on the flour, an' I wriggles and twists myself, and groans like a chap in a fit—what they calls *fittish*, thereaway—an' in course, with that they logs me down at once for a rig'lar holy 'possel from Jerusalem. The long an' the short on it was, the fittish-man takes me under charge, and sets me to tell fortins or the like with an ould quadrant they got somewheres—gives me a hut an' two black wives, begad! and there I lives for two or three weeks on end, no doubt, as proud as Tommy; when, one fine morning, what does I see off shore in the river but that confounded man-o'-war tender, all ship-shape an' ataunto again. So, my boy, I gives 'em to understand as how, bein' over vallible at home with the king of England, in course he'd sent for to puckalow me away—an' no sooner said, but the whole town gets in a fluster—the fittish-man, which a knowin' chap *he* was, takes and rubs me from heel to truck with ile out on a sartin nut as turned me coal-black in half-an-hour, an' as soon as I looks in the creek, mate, be blowed if I'd a knewn myself from a nigger, somehow!'

"To tell the truth, as *I* thought to myself, it was no wonder, as Master Harry's nose and lips were by no means in the classic style, and his skin, as it was, didn't appear of the whitest.

"So there, ye know, I sits before a hut grindin' away at maize, with nothink else but a waist-cloth round me, and my two legs stuck out, till such a time as the leftenant an' two boats' crews had sarched the villache, havin' heerd, no doubt, of a white man thereabouts—an' at last off they went. Well, in course, at first this here affair gives the fittish-man a lift in the niggers' eyes, by reason o' havin' turned a white man black—'cause, ye see, them fittish-men has a rig'lar-bred knowledge on plants and sich-like. But hows'ever, in a day or two I begins for to get rayther oneasy, seein' it didn't wash off, an' accordently I made bekknown as much to the fittish-man, when, my boy, if he doesn't shake his mop-head, and

rubbs noses, as much as to say, "We ain't agoin' to part." 'Twas no use, and thinks I, "Ye man-eating scum, be blowed if I don't put your neck out, then!" So I turns too with my knife on a log o' wood, carves a himmache twice as big an' ugly as his'n, and builds a hut over it, where I plays all the conjerin' tricks I could mind on—till, be hanged if the niggers didn't begin to leave the fittish-man pretty fast, and make a blessed sight more o' me. I takes a couple more wives, gets drunk every day on palm-wine and toddy juice—as for the hogs an' the yams they brought me, why I couldn't stow 'em away; an' in place o' wanting myself white again, I rubs myself over and over with that 'ere nut, let alone palm-ile, till the ould fittish-man looks brown alongside o' me. At last the king o' the niggers thereaway—King Chimbey they called him, or some'at o' that sort—he sends for to see me, an' away to his town they takes me, a mile or two up the country, where I see'd him; but I'm blowed, Jack, if he'd got a crown on at all, ownly a ould red marine's coat, an' a pair o' top-boots, what was laid away when he warn't in state. Hows'ever, he gives me two white beans an' a red un in sign o' high favour, and gives me to know as I wor to stay there. But one thing I couldn't make out, why the black king's hut an' the josst-house as they calls it, was all stuck round with bones an' dead men's skulls!—'twan't long, though, ere I finds it out, mate! That 'ere fittish-man, d'ye see, wor a right-down imp to look at, and wicked enough he eyed me; but still anon I sends over for my wives, turns out a black feller out on his hut, an' slings a hammock in it, when the next day or so I meets the first fittish-man in the woods, an' the poor divvle looks wonderful friendly-like, makin' me all kinds o' woful signs, and seemin'ly as much as to say for to keep a bright lookout on the other one. All on a suddent what does he do, but he runs a bit as far as a tree, picks up a sort of a red mushroom, an' he rubs with it across the back o' my hand, gives a wink, and scuttles off. What it meant I couldn't make out, till I gets back to the town, when I chanced to look at my flipper, and there I see a clean white streak alongst it! Well, I thinks, liberty's sweet, an' I'm blessed if a man's able to cruise much to windward o' right-down slavery, thinks I, if he's black! Howsomever, thinks I, I'll jest hold on a *bit* longer.

“Well, next day, the black king had the blue-devils with drinking rum, an’ he couldn’t sleep nohow, ’cause, as I made out, he’d killed his uncle, they said—I doesn’t know but he’d eaten him, too—anyhow, I see’d him eat as much of a fat hog, raw, as ud sarve out half the watch—so the fittish-man tells him there’s nought for it but to please the fittish. What that wor, blowed if I knew; but no sooner sundown nor they hauls me out o’ my hut, claps me in a stinking hole as dark as pitch, and leaves me till mornin’, as I thought. Jist about the end o’ the mid-watch, there kicks up a rumpus like close-reef taups’ls in a hurricane—smash goes the sticks over me; I seed the stars, and a whole lot o’ strange blacks with long spears, a-fightin’, yellin’, tramplin’, an’ twistin’ in the midst of the huts—and off I’m hoisted in the gang, on some feller’s back or other, at five knots the hour, through the woods—till down we all comes in a drove, plash amongst the very swamps close by the river, where, lo an’ behold! I makes out a schooner afloat at her anchor. The next thing I feels a red-hot iron come hiss across my shoulders, so I jumped up and sang out like blazes, in course. But, my flippers bein’ all fast, ’twas no use; I got one shove as sent me head-foremost into a long canoe, with thirty or forty niggers stowed away like cattle, and out the men pulls for the schooner. A big bright fire there was ashore, astarn of us, I mind, where they heated the irons, with a chap in a straw hat sarvin’ out rum to the wild blacks from a cask; and ye saw the pitch-black woods behind, with the branches shoved out red in the light on it, and a bloody-like patch on the water under a clump o’ sooty mangroves. An’, Jack, if I didn’t feel the life sick in me, that time—for, d’ ye see, I hears nothin’ spoke round me but cussed French, Portingeese, an’ nigger tongue—’specially when it jist lighthens on me what sort on a case I were in; an’ thinks I, “I’m took for a *slave*, arter all!—an’ be hanged, but I left that ’ere ’farnal mushroom a-lying under that there tree yonder!” I begins for to think o’ matters an’ things, an’ about Bristol quay, an’ my old mother, an’ my sister as was at school—mind ye, mate, all atwixt shovin’ off the mangroves an’ coming bump agen the schooner’s side—an’ blow me if I doesn’t turn to, an’ nigh-hand commences for to blubber—when jist then what does I catch sight on, by the lantern over the side, but that ’ere villain of a fittish-man, an’ what’s more,

King Chimbey hisself, both hauled in the net. And with that I gives a chuckle, as ye may suppose, an' no mistake; for thinks I, so far as consarns myself, this here can't last long, blow me, for sooner or later I'll find some un to speak to, even an I nivver gets rid o' this here outer darkness—be blowed if I han't got a white mind, any ways, an' free I'll be, my boy! But I laughs, in course, when I see'd the fittish-man grin at me—for thinks I, "My cocks, you're logged down for a pretty long spell of it!"

"Well, bo,' somehow I knows no more about it till such time as I sort o' wakes up in pitch-dark, all choke and sweat, an' a feller's dirty big toe in my mouth, with mine in some un else's eye; so out I spits it, an' makes a scramble for my life. By the roll and the splash I knowed I wor down in the schooner's hold; an' be hanged if there warn't twenty or thirty holding on like bees to a open weather-port, where the fresh wind and the spray come a-blowing through—but there, my boy, 'twere no go for to get so much as the tip o' yer nose. Accordently, up I prizes myself with my feet on another poor devil's wool—for d'ye see, by that time I minds a man's face no more nor so much timber—an' I feels for the hatch over me, where by good luck, as I thought, there I finds it not battened down yet, so I shoved my head through on deck like a blacksmith's hammer.

"Well, mate, there was the schooner's deck wet, a swell of a sea on round her, well off the land, no trifle of a morning gale, and the craft heeling to it; a lot o' hands up on her yards, a-reefing at the boom mains'l and fo'taups'l, an' if my heart doesn't jump into my mouth with the sight, for I feels it for all the world like a good glass o' grog, settin' all to rights. Two or three there was walkin' aft the quarter-deck, so out I sings, "Hullo! hullo there, shipmates, give us a hand out o' this!" Two on 'em comes for'ard, one lifts a handspike, but both gives a grin, as much as to say it's some nigger tongue or other in place o' good English—for, d'ye see, they'd half their faces black-beard, and rings i' their ears—when up walks another chap like the skipper, an' more the looks of a country-man. "I'm a free-born Briton!" roars I again; with that he lends me a squint, looks to the men, and gives some sort of a sign, when they jams-to the hatch and nips me fast by the neck. "Devil of a deep beggar, this 'ere!" says he; "jist

give him the gag, my lads," says he; "the planters often thinks more of a dumby, 'cause he works the more, and a stout piece o' goods this *is*!" says he. Well, mate, what does they do but one pulls out a knife, an' be blowed if they warn't a-goin' for to cut out my tongue; but the men aloft sung out to hoist away the yards; so they left me ready clinched till they'd belay the ropes. Next a hand for'ard, by good luck, hailed "Sail ho!" and they'd some'at else to think o' besides me; for there, my boy, little more nor three miles to wind'ard, I see'd the *Irish* as she come driving bodily out o' the mist, shakin' out her three to'gallant-sails, an' a white spray flying with her off one surge to another. Rather bad it was, mind ye, for my windpipe, for every time the schooner pitched, away swings my feet clear o' the nigger's heads—'cause, d' ye see, we chanced for to be stowed on the 'tween-decks, an' another tier there was, stuffed in her lower hold—an' there I stuck, mate, so as I couldn't help watchin' the whole chase, till at last the hatch slacks nip a bit, and down I plumps into the dark again.

"Well, bo', the breeze got lighter, an' to all seemin' the cursed schooner held her own; but hows'ever, the sloop-o'-war kept it up all day, and once or twice she tips us a long shot; till by sunset, as I reckoned, we hears no more on her. The whole night long, again, there we stews as thick as peas—I keeps harknin' to the sighs and groans, an' the wash along the side, in a sort of a doze; an' s'help me Bob, I fancies for a moment I'm swinging in my hammock in the foc'sle, an' it's no more but the bulkheads and timbers creakin'. Then I thinks it's some un else I dreams on, as *is* oneasy, like to choke for heat and thirst; and I'm a-chucklin' at him—when up I wakes with the cockroaches swarming over my face. Another groan runs from that end to this, the whole lot on us tries hard, and kicks their neighbours to turn, an' be blowed if I knowed but I was buried in a churchyard, with the horrid worms all a-crawl about me. All on a sudden, nigh-hand to daybreak it was, I hears a gun to wind'ard, so with that I contrives for to scramble up with my eye to the scuttle-port. 'Twas a stiffish breeze, an' I see'd some'at lift on a sea like a albatross's wing, as one may say—though what wor this but the *Irish's* bit of a tender, standing right across our bows—for the schooner, ye see, changed her course i' the night-time,

rig'lar slaver's dodge, thinkin' for to drop the sloop-o'-war, sure enough. But as for the little f'lucca, why they hadn't bargained for her at all, lying-to as she did, with a rag o' sail up, in the troughs of the sea, till the schooner was close on her.

“Well, no sooner does they go about, my boy, but the muskeety of a cruiser lets drive at her off the top of a sea, as we hung broadside to them in stays. Blessed if I ever see sich a mark!—the shot jist takes our foretop fair slap—for the next minute I seed the foretopmast come over the leeside, an' astarn we begins to go directly. What's more, mate, I never see a small craft yet handled better in a sea, as that 'ere chap did—nor the same thing done, cleaner at any rate—for they jist comes nigh-hand tip on our bowsprit-end, as the schooner lifted—then up in the wind they went like clock-work, with a starnway on as carried the f'lucca right alongside on us, like a coachman backing up a lane, and *grind* we both heaved on the swell, with the topmast hamper an' its canvas for a fender atwixt us. Aboard jumps the man-o'-war's-men, in course, cutlash in hand, an' for five minutes some tough work there was on deck, by the tramp, the shots, an' the curses over our heads—when off they shoved the hatches, and I seed a tall young feller in a gold-banded cap look below. Be blowed if I wasn't goin' to sing out again, for, d'ye see, I'm blessed if I took mind on the chap at all, as much by reason o' the blood an' the smoke he'd got on his face as aught else. Hows'ever, I holds a bit meantime, on account o' Job Price an' that 'ere piracy consarn—till what does I think, a hour or two arter, when I finds as this here were the very leftenant as chased us weeks on end in the Camaroons. So a close stopper, sure enough, I keeps on my jaw; an' as for scentin' me out amongst a couple o' hundred blacks in the hold, why, 'twere fit to 'ppal my own mother herself.

“Well, Jack, by this time bein' near Serry Loney, next day or so we got in—where, what does they do but they *lubberrates* us all, as they calls it, into a barracoon ashore, till sich time as the slaver ud be condemned—an' off goes the tender down coast again. Arter that, they treats us well enough, but still I dursn't say a word; for one day, as we goed to work makin' our huts, there I twigs a printed bill upon the church-wall, holdin' out a reward, d'ye see, consarnin' the

piratecy, with my own name and my very build logged down—ownly, be hanged if they doesn't tack on to it all, by way of a topgallant ink-jury to a man, these here words—"He's a very ugly feller—looks like a furriner." Well, mate, I ain't a young maiden, sure enough, but, thinks I, afore I fell foul o' that blasted fittish-man an' his nut, cuss me if I looks jist so bad as that 'ere! So ye know this goes more to my heart nor aught else, till there I spells out another confounded lie in the bill, as how Captin Price's men had mutinied again him, and murdered the brig's crew—when, in course, I sees the villain's whole traverse at once. So sayin', I watched my chance one night an' went aboard a Yankee brig as were to sail next day; an' I tells the skipper part o' the story, offerin' for to work my passage across for nothing; which, says he, "It's a hinterestin' narritif"—them was his words; and, says he, "It's a land o' freedom is the States, an' no mistake—ain't there no more on ye in the like case?" he says. "Not as I knows on, sir," I answers; an' says he, "Plenty o' coloured gen'lmen there is yonder, all in silks an' satins; an' I hear," says he, "there's one on 'em has a chance o' bein' President next time—anyhow I'm your friend," says he, quite hearty.

"Well, the long an' short of it was, I stays aboard the brig, works my spell in her, an' takes my trick at the hellum—but I'm blowed, Jack, if the men 'ud let me sleep in the foc'sle, 'cause I was a black, so I slung my hammock aft with the nigger stoord. D'ye see, I misgived myself a bit when we sank the coast, for, thinks I, it's in Africay as that 'ere blessed mushroom are to be found, to take the colour off me—hows'ever, I thinks it carn't but wear out in time, now I've got out o' that 'ere confounded mess, where, sure enough, things was against me. So at last the v'yage were up, an' the brig got in to New Orleans. There I walks aft to the skipper for to take leave, when says he, wonderfly friendly like, "Now, my lad," says he, "I'm goin' up river a bit for to see a friend as takes a interest in your kind—an' if ye likes, why I'll pay yer passage that far?" In course I agrees, and up river we goes, till we lands at a fine house, where I'm left in a far-handly, ye know, while the skipper an' his friend has their dinner. All at once the gen'lman shoves his head out of a doure, takes a look at me, an' in again—arter that I hears the chink o' dollars—then the skipper walks out, shuts the

doure, and says he to me, "Now," he says, "that's a 'cute sort o' tale ye tould me, my lad, but it's a lie, I guess!" "Lie, sir!" says I, "what d'ye mean?" for ye see that 'ere matter o' the iv'ry brig made me sing small at first. "No slack, Pumpey," says he, liftin' his forefinger like a schoolmaster; "ain't yer name Pumpey?" says he. "Pumpey!" says I, "my name's Jack Brown," for that wor the name I'd gived him afore. "Oh!" says he, "jest say it's Gin'ral Washington, right off. Come," says he, "I guess I'd jest tell ye what tripe you belongs to—you're a Mandigy nigger," says he. "It's all very well," he says, "that 'ere yarn, but that's wot they'd all say when they comes, they've been dyed black! Why," says he, "doesn't I see that 'ere brand one night on yer back—there's yer arms all over pagan tattoooin'——" "Bless ye, captin," I says, a-holdin' up my arm, "it's crowns an' anchors!" "Crowns!" says he, turnin' up his nose, "what does we know o' crowns hereaway—we ain't barbers yet, I guess"—of what he meant by *barbers* here, mate, I'm hanged if I knowed. "'Sides," says he, "you speaks broken Aimerricane!" "Merricain?" I says, "why, I speaks good English! an' good reason, bein' a freeborn Briton—as white's yerself, if so be I could ownly clap hands for a minnet on some o' them mushrooms I tould ye on!" "Where does they grow, then?" axes he, screwin' one eye up. "In Africay yonder, sir," I says, "more's the pity I hadn't the chance to lay hands on them again!" "Phoo!" says he, "glad they ain't *here*! An' does you think we're a-goin' for to send all the way over to Africay for them mushrooms you talks on? Tell ye what, yer free papers 'ud do ye a sight more good *here*!" says he; "it's no use with a black skin for to claim white laws; an' what's more, ye're too tarnation ugly-faced for it, let alone colour, Pumpey, my man," he says. "I tell ye what it is, Captin Edwards," says I, "my frontispiece ain't neither here nor there, but if you calls me Pumpey again, blowed an' I don't pitch inty ye!"—so with that I handles my bones in a way as makes him hop inside the doure—an' says the skipper houldin' it half-shut, "Harkee, lad," he says, "it's no go your tryin' for to run, or they'll make ye think angels o' bo'sun's-mates. But what's more," says he, "niver you whisper a word o' what ye tells me, about nuts an' mushrooms, or sich like trash—no more will I; for d'ye see, my lad, in that case

they'd jest *hush ye up* for good!" "Who d' ye mean?" I says, all abroad, an' of a shiver like—mindin' on the slave-schooner again. "Why, the planter's people," says he, "as I've sold ye to." An' with that he pints into his mouth, and shuts the doure.

"Well, mate, ye may fancy how I feels! Here I stands, givin' a look round for a fair offing; but there was bulwarks two fathom high all round the house, a big bloodhound lyin' chained, with his muzzle on his two paws, an' nobody seem'd for to mind me. So, I see'd it were all up wonst more; an' at the thou't of a knife in my tongue, I sits right down in the far-handy, rig'lar flabbergasted, when out that 'ere blasted skipper shoots his head again, an' says he, "Pumpey, my lad, good-day," says he; "you knows some'at o' the water, an' as they've boat-work at times hereaway, I don't know but, if you behaves yerself, they'll trust you with an oar now an' then: for I tould yer master jist now," says he, "as how you carn't speak no English!" Well, I gives him a hoath, 'cause by that time I hadn't a word to throw at a dog; and shortly arter, up comes the overseer with his black mate, walks me off to a shed, strips me, and gives me a pair o' cotton drawers and a broad hat—so out I goes the next mornin' for to hoe sugar-cane with a gang o' niggers.

"Well, mate, arter that I kept close enough—says no more, but mumbles a lot o' no-man's jargon, as makes 'em all log me down for a sort o' double-Guinea savitch—'cause why, I were hanged afeard for my tongue, seein', if so be I lost it, I'd be a nigger for ever, sure enough. So the blacks, for most part being country-bred, they talks nothin' but a blessed jumble, for all the world like babbies at home; an' what does they do but they fancies me a rig'lar African nigger, as proud as Tommy, an' a'most ready for to washup me they wor—why, the poor divvles 'ud bring me yams and fish; they kisses my flippers an' toes as I'd been the Pope; an' as for the young girls, I'm blowed if I warn't all the go amongst 'em—though I carn't say the same where both's white, ye know! What with the sun an' the cocoa-nut ile, to my thinkin', I gets blacker an' blacker—blessed if I didn't fancy a feller's very mind turned nigger. I larns their confounded lingo, an' I answers to the name o' Pumpey, blast it, till I right-down forgets that I'd ever another.

As for runnin', look ye, I knowed 'twas no use thereaway, as long as my skin tould against me, an' as long as Africay wor where it wor. So, my boy, I see'd pretty clear, ye know, as this here world 'ud turn a man into a rig'lar built slave-nigger in the long run if he was an angel out o' heaven!

"Well, mate, one day I'm in the woods amongst a gang, chopping firewood for the sugar-mill, when, what does I light on betwixt some big ground-leaves and sich like, but a lot o' them very same red mushrooms as the fittish-man shows me in Africay!—blowed if there warn't a whole sight o' them round about, too! So I pulls enough for ten, ye may be sure, stuffs 'em in my hat, an' that same night, as soon as all's dark, off I goes into the woods, right by the stars, for the nearest town 'twixt there and New Orleans. As soon as I got nigh-hand it, there I sits down below a tree amongst the bushes, hauls off my slops, an' I turns to for to rub myself all over, from heel to truck, till daybreak. So, in course, I watches for the light angshis enough, as ye may suppose, to know what colour I were. Well, strike me lucky, Jack, if I didn't jump near a fadom i' the air, when at last I sees I'm *white* wonst more!—blessed if I didn't feel myself a new man from stem to starn! I makes right for a creek near by, looks at my face in the water, then up I comes again, an' every yarn o' them cussed slave-togs I pulls to bits, when I shoves 'em under the leaves. Arter that I took fair to the water for about a mile, jist to smooth out my wake, like; then I shins aloft up a tree, where I stowed myself away till noon—'cause, d'ye see, I knowed pretty well what to look for next. An' by this time, mind ye, all them queer haps made a fellow wonderful sharp, so I'd scheme out the whole chart aforehand how to weather on them cussed Yankees.

"Accordently, about noon, what does I hear but that 'ere savitch bloodhound comin' along up creek, with a set o' slave-catchers astarn, for to smell out my track. With that, down I went in the water again, rounds a point into the big river, where I gets abreast of a landin' place, near the town, with craft laying out-stream, boats plyin', an' all alive. D'ye see, bo', I'd got no clothes at all, an' how for to rig myself again, 'blowed if I knows—seein' as how by this time I'd turned as white as the day I were born, an' a naked white

man in a town arn't no better than a black nigger. So in I swims like a porpus afore a breeze, an' up an' down I ducks in the shallow, for all the world like a chap a-takin' a bath; an' out I hollers to all an' sundry, with a Yankee twang i' my nose, for to know if they had seen my clothes, till a whole lot on 'em crowds on the quay. Hows'ever, I bethinks me on that 'ere blasted brand atwixt my shoulders, an' I makes myself out as modest as a lady, kicks out my legs, and splashes like a whale aground, an' sticks out my stern to 'em for to let 'em see it's white. "Hullo!" I sings out, "han't ye seen my clothes?" "No, stranger," says they, "someun's runned off with 'em, we cal'clates!" With that I tells 'em I'm a Boston skipper new comed up from New Orleans; an' not being used to the heat, why I'd took a bath the first thing; an' I 'scribes the whole o' my togs as if I'd made 'em—"split new," says I, "an' a beaver hat, more by token there's my name inside it; an'," says I, "there's notes for a hundred dollars in my trousers!"

"By this time down comes the slave-catchers, an' says they, hearin' on it, "That 'ere tarnation nigger's gone off with 'em, we'll know 'un by them marks well enough," says they, an' off they goes across river. "Hullo!" I sings out to the folks, "I'm a-gettin' cold here, so I guess I'll come ashore again, slick off!" I twangs out. "Guess ye can't, straunger!" they hails; "not till we gets ye some kiverin's!—we're considerable proper here, we are!" "Ain't this a free country, then?" I says, givin' a divvle of a splash; an' with that they begs an' axes me for to hould on, an' they'd fix me, as they calls it, in no time. "Well, mate, what does they do but one an' another brings me somethin' as like what I 'scribed as could be, hands 'em along on a pole, an' I puts 'em on then an' there. Arter that, the ladies o' the place bein' blessed modest, an' all of a fright leest I'd a comed out an' gone through the town—why, out o' grannytude, as they says, they gets up a supper-scription on a hundred dollars to make up my loss—has a public meetin' logged down for the evenin', when I'm for to indress the citizens, as they says, all about freedom an' top-gallantry, an' sichlike. Hows'ever, I jist sticks my tongue in my cheek, eats a blessed good dinner in a hot-ell, watches my chance, an' off by a track-boat at sundown to

New Orleans, where I shipped aboard a English barque, an' gets safe out to sea wonst more.

"'Lord love ye, Harry!' exclaimed Jack hereupon, 'the likes o' that now! But I've heerd say, them fittish-men you talks on has wonderful knowledge—why, mayhap it's them as keeps all the niggers black, now?' 'Well, bo', said Harry, 'I don't doubt but if them 'Merricain slaves jist knowed o' that 'ere red mushroom, why they'd show the Yankees more stripes nor stars! D'ye see, if a Yankee knowed as his own father were a-hoein' his sugar-canes, blowed if he wouldn't make him work up his liberty in dollars! All the stripes, d'ye see, mate, is for the blacks, an' all the stars is for the whites, in them Yankee colours as they brags so much about! But what I says is, it's cussed hard to get through this 'ere world, shipmate, if ye doesn't keep well to the wind'ard of it!'

"I was the more amused with this account of the ugly rascal's adventures that I remembered two or three of the occasions he mentioned, and he told them pretty exactly so far as I had to do with them. As for the fetish-man's curious nut, and that extraordinary mushroom of his, why 'ten to one,' thought I, 'but all the while the fellow never once touched a piece of *soap*!' which, no doubt, had as much to do with it as anything besides. Somehow or other, notwithstanding, I had taken almost a fancy to the villain—such a rough sample of mankind he was, with his uncouth grumpy voice, and his huge black beard; and he gave the story in a cool, scornful sort of way that was laughable in itself. 'So, my lad,' I thought, 'it seems you and I have met twice before; but if you play any of your tricks this time, Master Harry, I hope you've found your match'; and certainly, if I had fancied my gentleman was in the slaver's hold that time off the African coast, I'd have 'lubberrated' him with a vengeance.

"'I say, mates,' said he again, with a sulky kind of importance, to those of the watch who had gathered round during the last half of his yarn, 'there's three things I hates—an' good reason!' 'What be's they, Harry?' asked the rest. 'One's a Yankee,' said he, 'an' be blowed to him; the second's a slaver; and the third is—I can't abide a nigger, nohow. But d'ye see, there's one thing I *likes*——'

Here eight bells struck out, and up tumbled the watch below, with Jacobs' hearty face amongst them : so I made my way aft, and, of course, missed hearing what that said delightful thing might be, which this tarry Æsop approved of so much.

CHAPTER XII

“WHILE I was listening, I had scarcely noticed, that within the last few minutes a light air had begun to play aloft among the higher canvas, a faint cat's-paw came ruffling here and there a patch of the water, till by this time the Indiaman was answering her wheel again, and moving slowly ahead, as the breeze came down and crept out to the leeches of her sails, with a sluggish lifting of her heavy fore-course. The men were all below at breakfast, forward, and, of course, at that hour the poop above me was quite a Babel of idlers' voices ; while I looked into the compass and watched the ship's head falling gradually off from north-east-by-north, near which it had stuck pretty close since daybreak. The sun was brought before her opposite beam, and such a perfect gush of hazy white light shot from that quarter over the larboard bulwarks, that thereaway, in fact, there might have been a fleet of ships, or a knot of islands, and we none the wiser, as you couldn't look into it at all.

“The chief mate came handing a wonderfully timid young lady down the poop-ladder with great care, and as soon as they were safe on the quarter-deck, she asked, with a confiding sort of lisp, ‘And where are we going *now* then, Mr Finch?’ ‘Well, miss,’ simpered he, ‘wherever *you* please, I'll be glad to conduct you!’ ‘Oh, but the ship I mean,’ replied she, giggling prettily. ‘Why,’ said Finch, stooping down to the binnacle, ‘she heads due south-east at present, miss.’ ‘I *am* so glad you are going on again!’ said the young lady ; ‘but oh ! when shall we see dear *land* once more, Mr Finch?’ ‘Not for more than a week, I fear,’ answered the mate, ‘when we arrive at the Cape of Good Hope. But there, miss, your poetic feelings will be gratified, I assure you. The hills there, I might say, Miss Brodie,’ he went on, ‘not to speak of the woods, are quite dramatic ! You mustn't suppose the rough

mariner, rude as he seems, Miss Brodie, is entirely devoid of romance in his sentiments, I hope !' and he looked down for the twentieth time that morning at his boots as he handed her down the cabin hatchway, longing to see the Cape, no doubt. 'Much romance, as you call it, there is in ugly Harry yonder !' thought I ; and comparing this sort of stuff, aft, with the matter-of-fact notions before the mast, made me the more anxious for what might turn up in a few hours, with this gallant first officer left in full charge, and the captain, as I understood, unable to leave his cot. A good enough seaman the fellow was, so far as your regular deep-sea work went, which those India voyagers had chiefly to do with then ; but for aught out of the way, or a sudden pinch, why, the peace had just newly set them free of their leading-strings, and here this young mate brought his new-fangled school navigation, forsooth, to run the *Seringapatam* into some mess or other ; whereas, in a case of the kind, I had no doubt he would prove as helpless as a child.

"By this time, for my part, all my wishes for some ticklish adventure were almost gone, when I thought of our feelings at the loss of the boat, as well as the number of innocent young creatures on board, with Lota Hyde herself amongst them ; while here had I got myself fairly set down for a raw griffin. Yet neither Westwood nor I, unless it came to the very worst, could venture to make himself openly useful ! I was puzzled both what to think of our exact case, and what to do ; whereas a pretty short time in these latitudes, as the foremast-man had said, might finish our business altogether ; indeed, the whole look of things, somehow or other, at that moment, had a strange unsettled touch about it, out of which one unaccustomed to those parts might be sure some change would come. The air, a little ago, was quite suffocating, the heat got greater ; and the breeze, though it seemed to strengthen aloft, at times sank quietly out of her lower canvas like a breath drawn in, and caught it again as quietly ere it fell to the masts. What with the slow huge heave of the water, as it washed glittering past, and what with the blue tropical sky overhead, getting paler and paler at the horizon astern, from fair heat—while the sunlight and the white haze on our larboard beam, made it a complete puzzle to behold—why, I felt just like some fellow in one of those stupid dreams after a heavy supper,

with nothing at all in them, when you don't know how long or how often you've dreamt it before. Deuce the hand or foot you can stir, and yet you've a notion of something horrid that's sure to come upon you.

"We couldn't be much more than a hundred miles or so to south'ard of St Helena; but we might be two thousand miles off the land, or we might be fifty. I had only been once in my life near the coast thereaway, and certainly my recollections of it weren't the most pleasant. As for the charts, so little was known of it that we couldn't depend upon them; yet there was no doubt the ship had been all night long in a strong set of water toward north-east, right across her course. For my own part, I was as anxious as anyone else to reach the Cape, and get rid of all this cursed nonsense; for since last night, I saw quite well by her look that Violet Hyde would never favour me, if I kept in her wake to the day of judgment. There was I, too, every time I came on deck and saw those round-house doors, my heart leapt into my throat, and I didn't know port from starboard! But what was the odds, that I'd have kissed the very pitch she walked upon, when *she* wasn't for *me*!—being deep in love don't sharpen the faculties neither, and the more I thought of matters the stupider I seemed to get. 'Green Hand!' thought I, 'as Jacobs and the larboard watch call me, it appears—why, they're right enough! A green hand I came afloat nine years ago, and, by Jove! though I know the sea and what belongs to it, from sheer liking to them, as 'twere—it seems a green hand I'm to stick—seeing I know so blessed little of womankind, not to speak of that whole confounded world ashore! With all one's schemes and one's weather-eye, something new always keeps turning up to show one what an ass he is; and hang me, if I don't begin to suppose I'm only fit for working small traverses upon slavers and jack-nasty-faces, after all! There's Westwood, without troubling himself, seems to weather upon me, with her, like a Baltimore clipper on a Dutch schuyt!' In short, I wanted to leave the *Seringapatam* as soon as I could, wish them all a good voyage together away for Bombay, sit down under Table Mountain, and then perhaps go and travel amongst the Hot-tentots by way of a change.

"The chief officer came aft towards the binnacle again, with a strut in his gait, and more full of importance than ever,

of course. 'This breeze'll hold, I think, Macleod?' said he to the second mate, who was shuffling about in a lounging, unseamanlike way he had, as if he felt uncomfortable on the quarter-deck, and both hands in his jacket pockets. 'Well,' said the Scotchman, 'do ye not think it's too early begun, sir?' and he looked about like an old owl, winking against the glare of light past the mainsheet to larboard; 'I'll not say but it will, though,' continued he, 'but 'odsake, sir, it's terrible warm!' 'Can't be long ere we get into Cape Town now,' said the mate, 'so you'll turn the men on deck as soon as breakfast's over, Mr Macleod, and commence giving her a coat of paint outside, sir.' 'Exactly, Mr Finch,' said the other, 'all hands it'll be, sir? For any sake, Mr Finch, give they lazy scoundrels something to do!' 'Yes, all hands,' said Finch; and he was going below, when the second mate sidled up to him again, as if he had something particular to say. 'The captain'll be quite better by this time, no doubt, Mr Finch?' asked he. 'Well—d'ye mean?' inquired the mate, rather shortly; 'why no, sir, when the surgeon saw him in the morning watch, he said it was a fever, and the sooner we saw the Cape the better for him.' 'No doubt, no doubt, sir,' said the second mate, thoughtfully, putting his forefinger up his twisted nose, which I noticed he did in such cases, as if the twist had to do with his memory—'no doubt, sir, that's just it! The doctor's a sharp Edinbro' lad—did he see aucht by common about the captain, sir?' 'No,' said Finch, 'except that he wanted to go on deck this morning, and the surgeon took away his clothes and left the door locked.' 'Did he, though?' asked Macleod, shaking his head, and looking a little anxious; 'didna he ask for aucht in particular, sir?' 'Not that I heard of, Mr Macleod,' replied the mate; 'what do you mean?' 'Did he not ask for a green leaf?' replied the second mate. 'Pooh,' said Finch, 'what if he did?' 'Well, sir,' said Macleod, 'neither you nor the doctor's sailed five voyages with the captain, like me. He's a quiet man, Captain Weelumson, an' well he knows his calling; but sometimes warm weather doesn't do with him, more especial siccan warm weather as this, when the moon's full, as it is the night, ye know, Mr Finch. There's something else besides that, though, when he's taken that way.' 'Well, what is it?' asked the mate, carelessly. 'Oo!' said Macleod, 'it can't be *that*

this time, of course, sir—it's when he's near the *land*! The captain knows the smell of it, these times, Mr Finch, as well as a cockroach does—an' it's then he asks for a green leaf, and wants to go straight ashore—I mind he did it the voy'ge before last, sir. He's a quiet man, the captain, as I said, for ord'nar—but when he's roused, he's a——' 'Why, what was the matter with him?' said Finch, more attentive than before; 'you don't mean to say?—go on, Mr Macleod.' The second mate, however, looked cautious, closed his lips firmly, and twirled his red whiskers, as he glanced with one eye aloft again. 'Hoo!' said he, carelessly, 'hoo, it's nothing, nothing—just, I'm thinking, sir, what they call disgestion ashore—all frae the stommach, Mr Finch. We used just for to lock the state-room door, an' never let on we heard—but at any rate, sir, *this* is no the thing at all, ye know! Mester Semm,' continued he to the fat midshipman, who came slowly up from the steerage, picking his teeth with a pocket-knife, 'go forrid and get the bo'sun to turn up all hands.'

"'Sir,' said I, stepping up to the mate next moment, before the round-house, 'might I use the freedom of asking whereabouts we are at present?' Finch gave me a look of cool indifference, without stirring head or hand; which I saw, however, was put on, as, ever since our boating affair, the man evidently detested me, with all his pretended scorn. 'Oh certainly, sir!' said he, 'of course!—sorry I haven't the ship's log here to show you—but it's two hundred miles or so below St Helena, eight hundred miles odd off the south-west African coast, with a light westerly breeze bound for the Cape of Good Hope—so after that you can look about you, sir!' 'Are you *sure* of all that, sir?' asked I, seriously. 'Oh no, of course not!' said he, still standing as before, 'not in the least, sir! It's nothing but quadrant, sextant, and chronometer work, after all—which every young gentleman don't believe in!' Then he muttered aloud, as if to himself, 'Well, if the captain *should* chance to ask for a *green* leaf, I know where to find it for him!'

"I was just on the point of giving him some angry answer or other, and perhaps spoiling all, when I felt a tap on my shoulder, and on turning round saw the Indian judge, who had found me in the way either of his passage or his prospect, on stepping out of the starboard door. 'Eh!' said he, jocu-

larly, as I begged his pardon, 'eh, young sir—I've nothing to do with pardons—always leave that to the governor-general and councillors! Been doing anything wrong, then? Ah, what's this—still calm, or some of your wind again, Mr Officer?' 'A fine breeze like to hold, Sir Charles,' answered the mate, all bows and politeness. 'So!' said Sir Charles; 'but I don't see Captain Williamson at all this morning—where is he?' 'I am sorry to say he is very unwell, Sir Charles,' said Finch. 'Indeed!' exclaimed the judge, with whom the captain stood for all the seamanship aboard, and looking round again rather dissatisfied. 'Don't like that, though. I hope he won't be long unable to attend to things, sir—let me know as soon as he is recovered, if you please.' 'Certainly, Sir Charles,' said the chief officer, touching his cap with some appearance of pique; 'but I hope, sir, I understand my duties in command, Sir Charles.' 'Daresay, sir,' said the judge, 'as officer, probably. Commander absent—horrible accidents already,' he muttered, crossly, changing his usual high sharp key to a harsh croak, like a saw going through a heavy spar, 'something sure to go wrong—wish we'd done with this deuced tiresome voyage. Ha, young gentleman,' exclaimed he, turning as he went in, 'd'ye play chess—suppose not—eh?' 'Why yes, sir,' said I, 'I do.' 'Well,' continued he, overhauling me more carefully than he had done before, though latterly I had begun to be somewhat in his good graces when we met by chance, 'after all, you've a *chess* eye, if you know the game at all. Come in, then, for God's sake, and let's begin. Ever since the poor brigadier *went*, I've had only myself or a girl to play against. 'Gad, sir, there is something, I can't express how horrible to my mind, in being matched against *nobody*—or, what's worse, against a *woman*! But recollect, young gentleman, I can *not* bear a tyro'; and he glanced at me as we walked into the large poop-cabin as sharply and as cold as a nor'-wester, ere it breaks to windward.

"Now I happened to know the game, and to be particularly fond of it; so, restless as I felt otherwise, I gave the old nabob a quiet nod, laid down my griffin-looking straw hat on the sofa, and in two minutes there we were, sitting opposite over a splendid China-made chess-board, with elephants, emperors, mandarins, and Chinamen, all square and ataunto,

as if they'd been set ready for days. The dark *kitmagar* commenced fanning over his master's head with a bright feather punka, the other native servant handed him his twisted hookah and lighted it, after which he folded his arms and stood looking down on the board like a pundit at some campaign of the Great Mogul; while the judge himself waited for my first move, as if it had been some of our plain English fellows in Hindostan commencing against your whole big India hubbub and finery, to get hold of it all in the end. For my part I sat at first all of a tingle and tremble, thinking how near his lovely daughter might be; and there were the breakfast-cups laid out on a round table at the other side, behind me.

"However, I made my move, Sir Charles made his, and pitched into the game in a half-impatient, half long-headed sort of way, anxious to get to the thick of it, as it were, once more. Not a word was said, and you only heard the suck of the smoke bubbling through the water-bottle of his pipe, after each move the judge made; till I set myself to the play in right earnest, and, owing to the old gentleman's haste at the beginning, or his over-sharpness, I hooked him into a mess with which I used to catch the old hands at chess in the cockpit, just by fancying what *they* meant to be at. The judge lifted his head, looked at me, and went on again. 'Your queen is in check, Sir Charles!' said I, next time, by way of a polite hint. 'Check, though, young gentleman!' said he, chuckling, as he dropped one of his outlandish knights, which I wasn't yet up to the looks of, close to the windward of my blessed old Turk of a king; so the skirmish was just getting to be a fair set-to, when I chanced to lift my eyes, and saw the door from the after-cabin open, with Miss Hyde coming through. 'Now, papa,' exclaimed she on the moment, 'you must come to breakfast'—when all of a sudden, at seeing another man in the cabin, she stopped short. Being not so loud and griffin-like in my toggery that morning, and my hat off, the young lady didn't recognise me at first—though the next minute, I saw by her colour and her astonished look, she not only did that, but something else—no doubt remembering at last where she had seen me ashore. 'Well, child,' said the judge, 'make haste with it, then!—Recollect where we are, now, young gentleman—and come to breakfast.' She had a pink muslin

morning-dress on, with her brown hair done up like the Virgin Mary in a picture, and the sea had taken almost all the paleness off her cheek that it had in the ball-room at Epsom, a month or two ago—and, by Jove! when I saw her begin to pour out the tea out of the silver teapot, I didn't know *where* I was! 'Oh, I forgot,' said the judge, waving his hand from me to her, in a hurry, 'Mr Robins, Violet! ho, *kitmagar*, curry l'ao!' 'Oh,' said she, stiffly, with a cold turn of her pretty lip, 'I have met Mr—Mr——' 'Collins, ma'am,' said I. 'I have met this gentleman by accident *before*.' 'So you have—so you have,' said her father; 'but you play chess well, Mr—a—a—what's his name?—ah! Colly. Gad, you play *well*, sir—we must have it out!'

"The young lady glanced at me again with a sort of astonishment; at last she said, no doubt for form's sake, though as indifferently as possible: 'You have known your friend the missionary gentleman long, I believe, sir?—the Reverend Mr Thomas—I think that is his name?' 'Oh no, ma'am!' said I hastily, for the judge was the last man I wished should join Westwood and me together, 'only since we crossed the Line, or so.' 'Why, I thought he said you were at school together!' said she, in surprise. 'Why—hem—certainly not, ma'am—a—a—I—a—a—I don't remember the gentleman there,' I blundered out. 'Eh, what?—check to your queen, young gentleman, surely?' asked Sir Charles. 'What's this, though! Always like to hear a mystery explained, so'—and he gave me one of his sharp glances. 'Why, why—surely, young man, now I think of it in that way, I've seen you before in some peculiar circumstances or other—on land, too. Why, where was it—let me see now?' putting his finger to his forehead to think; while I sat pretty uneasy, like a small pawn that had been trying to get to the head of the board, and turn into a knight or a bishop, when it falls foul of a grand figured-out king and queen. However, the queen is the only piece you need mind at a distance, and blessed hard it is to escape from *her*, of course. Accordingly, I cared little enough for the old nabob finding out I had gone in chase of them; but there sat his charming little daughter, with her eyes on her teacup; and whether the turn of her face meant coolness, or malice, or amusement, I didn't know—though she

seemed a little anxious too, I thought, lest her father should recollect me.

“‘It wasn’t *before* me, young man?’ asked he, looking up of a sudden: ‘no, that must have been in India—*must* have been in England, when I was last there—let me see.’ And I couldn’t help fancying what a man’s feelings must be, tried for his life, as I caught a side-view of his temples working, dead in my wake, as it were. The thing was laughable enough, and for a moment I met Lota’s eye as he mentioned England—’twas too short a glimpse, though, to make out; and, thought I, ‘he’ll be down on Surrey directly, and then Croydon—last of all, the back of his garden-wall, I suppose!’ ‘Check’ it was, and what I was going to say I couldn’t exactly conceive, unless I patched up some false place or other, with matters to match, and mentioned it to the old fellow, though small chance of its answering with such a devil of a lawyer—when all at once I thought I heard a hail from aloft; then the second mate’s voice roared close outside, ‘Hullo!—aloft there!’ The next moment I started up, and looked at Miss Hyde, as I heard plainly enough the cry, ‘On deck there—land O!’ I turned round at once, and walked out of the round-house to the quarter-deck, where, two minutes after, the whole of the passengers were crowding from below, the judge and his daughter already on the poop. Far aloft, upon the fore-to-gallant-yard, in the hot glare of the sun, a sailor was standing with his hand over his eyes, and looking to the horizon, as the Indiaman stood quietly before the light breeze. ‘Where-away-ay?’ was the next hail from the deck. ‘Broad on our larboard bow, sir,’ was the answer.”

CHAPTER XIII

“WELL, ma’am,” continued the naval man, on again resuming his narrative, “as I told you, the sudden hail of ‘Land!’ brought us all on deck in a twinkling, in the midst of my ticklish conversation with the judge. ‘Hallo! you aloft!’ shouted the chief officer himself, ‘d’ye hear, sirrah! use your eyes before hailing the deck!’ ‘Land, sir!’ came falling down again out of the sunlight; ‘land it is, sir—broad away on our larboard bow, sir.’

“By this time it was about half-past nine, or ten o'clock, of the morning. Heading nearly due south-east, as we now were, the Indiaman's bowsprit ran up into the full white blaze of light, in which her flying jib-boom seemed to quiver and writhe far away from her like an eel in water; while the spread of her sails against it loomed twice as large as ordinary from the sort of hazy double-edged look they had, with a twinkling thread of sun drawing all round them like a frame, as if one saw through a wrong-screwed glass. You'd have thought by the glance under the fore-course, over the ship's head-gratings, she was travelling off quietly into some no-man's-land or other, where it would be so bright we should have to wear blue spectacles: the light breeze being almost direct from nor'-west, and so fairly in her favour, with the help of her studding-sails she was making wonderful progress for such a mere breath—about four knots to the hour, as I reckoned. The air aloft appeared in the meantime to be steadying and *sucking* though the water kept smooth, and her bows scarce made a noise in it: the wide soft swells of the sea just floated up of a pale blue, and lifted her on, till she went seething gently down into it again; only, if you put your head over the starboard side, and listened, you thought you heard a sort of dull poppling ripple coming along the bends from round her counter. As for the line of horizon on one bow or the other, 'twas hardly to be made out at all, with a streaky white haze overlying it, up in the sky as it were, on both sides, behind the dazzle of light. However, the passengers were fancying all kinds of fine tropical matters lay hidden thereaway; and in fact, what with the notion of land after a long voyage, and what with the faint specks of bright cloud that seemed to be melting far off in the glare—to anyone last from Gravesend, that had never seen anything stranger than Richmond Hill of a Sunday, the whole thing ahead of the ship would have rather an enchanted sort of a look. At length the third mate was seen to shove his spy-glass together in the top-gallant cross-trees, and came slowly down the rigging. ‘Well, Mr Rickett,’ said the chief officer, meeting him, as he landed on deck. ‘Well, sir,’ said Rickett, ‘it *is* land after all, Mr Finch!’ The mate rapped out an oath, and took another turn: Macleod screwed his mouth as if he were going to whistle, then pulled his red whiskers instead, and looked queer at Rickett; while

Rickett stood peering into his spy-glass as he would have done into his hat, had he still been a foremast-man. The mate's eye met his, then turned to the passengers leaning over the poop-railing; and they all three walked to the capstan, where they began to overhaul the charts, and laid their heads together out of earshot.

"Now, whether this said land just made out on the north-east trended away back to south-east, as the clearer look of the horizon to starboard made one think, it was hard to say—though in *that* way of it, there were *seemingly* two plans for widening her distance. Either Finch might think it better to keep hold of a fair wind, and just edge her off enough to drop the point on her weather quarter—when, of course, if things stood as they were, we should soon set a good stretch of water betwixt us and the coast; or else they might brace direct round on the other tack, and head right south-west'ard, out to sea again; though if we were still *in* it, the current would set us every bit as much in its own direction as ever. Accordingly, I sidled nearer to the capstan, and watched anxiously for what the third mate had to propose, after humming and hawing a little, and scratching his head under his cap for half a minute. 'At any rate, Mr Finch, sir,' said he, 'more especially the captain being off charge, I may say, why, I'd advise ye, sir, to——' Here he dropped his voice; but Finch apparently agreed to what he said.

"'Ready about ship, there!'" said the second mate aloud to the boatswain forward; and in ten minutes afterwards the *Seringapatam* was fairly round, as I had expected, heading at a right-angle to her former course, with the breeze before her starboard beam, and the sun blazing on the other. I walked forward to the bows, and actually started to hear how loud and clear the ripple had got under them of a sudden; meeting her with a splash, as if she were making six or seven knots headway, while the canvas seemed to draw so much stiffer aloft, you'd have supposed the breeze had freshened as soon as the helm was put down. The mates looked over the side and aloft, rubbing their hands and smiling to each other, as much as to say how fast she was hauling off the bad neighbourhood she was in, though the heat was as great as ever, and you didn't feel a breath more air below, nor see the water ruffle. To *my* notion, in fact, it was just the set of the current against

her that seemingly freshened her way, the ship being now direct in its teeth; so that, of course, it would keep bearing her up all the time away north-eastward, with her own leeway to help it; and the less could anyone notice the difference betwixt the water going past her side, and *her* passing the water. This tack of hers, which Rickett, no doubt, thought such a safe plan, might be the very one to put her in a really dangerous way yet: for when they did discover this under-tow, how were they to take her out of it, after all? Probably by trying to stand fair across the stream of it to southward, which, without three times the wind we had, would at best take us out many miles nearer the land it set upon, or leave us perhaps becalmed in the midst of it.

“The truth was, that although I hadn’t seen what like the land was, and couldn’t have said, by the chart, *where* we were, I began to have a faint notion of whereabouts we possibly soon might be, from what I remembered hearing an old quartermaster in the *Iris* say, a couple of years before, regarding a particular spot on the south-west coast, where the currents at some seasons, as he phrased it, made a regular racecourse meeting. The old fellow gave me also, at the time, some bearings of the nearest coast, with the landmarks at the mouth of a river a little farther north—which, he said, he would know if you set him down there of a dark night, though he had been in his bed at Gosport the minute before, if there was just a bright streak of sky to the eastward—namely, a big black rock like two steps, and a block at the foot of them, somewhat the shape of a chipped holystone, running down on one side out of a high headland, like an admiral’s cocked hat, with six mop-headed trees upon the root of the rock, for all the world like hairs on a wart. Here I recollected how my worthy authority pointed modestly for example to a case of the kind on his own nose. The opposite shore of its mouth was flat, with a heavy white surf; but it shut in so far upon the other, he said, that, steering from the south’ard, one would never know there was a river there at all. The Bambar he called it; but if he meant the Bembarooghe, we could scarcely be near *it*, or that much toward being abreast of St Helena. For all I saw, indeed, we might have nothing to eastward of us save a hard coast, or else the sandy coast farther down, shoaling out of sight of land. At any rate, I knew we must have got into

the tail of the great sea-stream from round the Cape of Good Hope, which would, no doubt, split out at sea on Viana's Bank, and turn partly to north-eastward thereabouts; so that it wasn't a very bad guess to suppose we were getting up somewhere near Cape Frio, the likeliest place in the world to find old Bob Martin's 'Maze,' which we used to joke about so in the *Iris*.

"What was done, though, required to be done quickly, and I looked about for Tom Westwood, till I saw him on the poop amongst the rest, talking again to Miss Hyde, as they all crowded towards the lee-quarter to watch the land-haze seemingly dropping astern. My heart swelled as it were into my throat, however, at such an appearance of good understanding betwixt the two—whereas there was *she*, an hour ago that very morning, would scarce favour me with a look or a word!—and, for the life of me, I couldn't have spoken to Westwood at the time, much less gone hand in hand; for that matter he didn't seem to be suspecting aught wrong to trouble himself about. What to say or do, either, I couldn't think; since the more he cut me out, and the less friendly I felt to him, the less could I risk the chance of showing us both up for what we *were*—which, of course, would bring him in for the worst of it; as if *I*, by Jove, were going to serve him some low trick for the sake of shoving *him* out with the young lady.

"Meantime I kept fidgeting about, as if the deck were too hot for me, snatching a glance now and then, in spite of myself, at Violet Hyde's fairy-like figure; so different from the rest of them, as she stretched eagerly from below the awning over the ship's quarter-gallery, trying to make out where the land lay—now putting her little hand over her eyes to see better, then covering them altogether from the dazzle, as she drew in her head again and shook her bright brown hair in the shadow, answering Westwood—confound him! The Indian servant each time carefully poking out the red and yellow punkah-fringe for a cover over her, while the passengers were one and all ready to cry at not seeing the land, and leaving it behind. The judge himself was the only man that seemed to have a dim notion of something queer in the whole case; for every few minutes he walked quietly to the break of the poop,

where I noticed him cast a doubtful look down upon the 'chief officer'; and when the surgeon came up, he asked anxiously how Captain Williamson was, and if he, couldn't be seen below. However, the surgeon told him the captain had just fallen for the first time into a good sleep, and there was no admittance, but he was likely to be much better soon.

"By this time there was no standing out from under the awnings, and the quarter-deck and poop had to be well swabbed to keep them at all cool, the steam of it rising inside with a pitchy, hempen sort of smell you never feel save in the Tropics; the *Seringapatam* still feeling the breeze aloft, and lifting on the water with a ripple forward, although her big courses went lapping fore and aft every time she swung. The long white haze on the horizon began to melt as the sun heightened, clearing from under the wake of the light, till now you could fairly see the sky to eastward. Near noon, in fact, we had almost dropped the haze altogether on the ship's quarter; and at first I was glad to see how much way she had made in the two hours, when on second thoughts, and by noticing some marks in the loom of it, I had no doubt but though she might be farther off, why it was only while she set more up to north-eastward, so that we were actually, so to speak, leaving it by getting nearer! However, as the men were at dinner, and most of the passengers gone off the poop, down to 'tiffin,' I made up my mind to try what I could do in a quiet way, towards making the mate think of it more seriously.

"'Ah,' said I, in a would-be brisk and confidential kind of way, 'glad we're leaving that—a—you know, that land, Mr Finch.' 'Indeed, sir,' said he indifferently. 'Oh, you know,' said I, 'it's all very well for the *passengers* there to talk fine about land—land—but you and I, Mr Finch, don't need to be told that it's always dangerous at sea, you know.' The mate lifted his head and eyed me for a moment or two between the disgust a sailor feels at seeing a fellow pretend to aught like seamanship, and a particular sort of spite toward me which I'd noticed growing in him for the last few days—though I daresay my breakfasting that morning in Sir Charles's cabin might have brought it to a height.

"'Land dangerous, sir!' answered he carelessly, as he

went on wiping his quadrant again ; ‘who put *that* into your head?’ ‘Oh, well,’ returned I, just as carelessly, ‘if it’s to leeward of course—or with a current taking you towards it—only then. But I’ve no doubt, Mr Finch, if this wind *were* to—ah—you know, heave more abaft, that’s to say get stronger, the craft would at least stand still, till you got her.’ ‘What on earth *are* you talking about, Mr Ford—Collins, I mean?’ asked he sharply. ‘Really, sir, I’ve got something more to attend to at present, than such trash about a current, and the devil knows what else!’ ‘How, why, Mr Finch,’ said I, seemingly surprised in my turn, ‘*are* we not in a current just now, then?’ ‘Current!’ replied Finch, almost laughing outright, ‘what *does* the man mean?’ ‘Why, every one thinks so, in the cuddy,’ said I, as if rather taken aback, and venturing what you fair ladies call a ‘fib,’ ‘ever since we picked up the bottle last night.’ This, by-the-by, had got spread through some of the men to the passengers, though, of course, nobody knew what had been in it yet. ‘*There*, I declare now,’ continued I, pointing to our lee-bow, where I’d had my eyes fixed during the five minutes we spoke, ‘we can try it again. Do you see that bird yonder on the water?’ The mate turned his head impatiently, and ‘Look, watch him, sir,’ said I.

“This was a tired man-o’-war bird afloat about twenty fathoms off, with its sharp white wings stretched just clear of the water, and its black eye sparkling in the sunlight, as it came dipping on the long, smooth, hot-blue swell into the lee of the ship’s lofty hull, till you saw its very shadow in the glitter below it. The Indiaman seemed to pass him as if he rode there at anchor; only the curious thing was, that the bird apparently neared her up from leeward, crossing her larboard quarter within a fathom or two, when all of a sudden he got becalmed, as it were, in the wake right astern, and by the time either of us could walk to the ship’s taffrail, she was close over him; as if, whenever her hull was end-on, it took his surface-drift away from him, and, what was more, as if the *ship* kept hold of it—her eighteen feet or so to his little inch of a draught—for it couldn’t be owing to the wind.

“However, the man-o’-war bird took offer of the next swell to get air in his wings, and rose off the heave of it with a

sharp bit of a scream, away after some black boobies diving for fish, which no doubt he would catch, as they dropped them at sight of him.

"The mate upon this started and looked round, then aloft. 'Confound it!' said he to himself, 'if this breeze would only freshen! There is a sort of set on the surface just now,' continued he to me, coolly enough, 'though how you idlers happened to have an idea of it puzzles me, unless because you've nothing else to do but watch the water. Currents are pretty frequent hereabouts, however.' 'Dear me!' said I, 'but if we should——' 'Stuff, sir!' said he, quickly, 'the coast here must be steep-to enough, I should think, since if it weren't for the haze, we'd have sighted it thirty miles off! What we want is wind—wind, to let's cross it.' 'But then a calm, Mr Finch,' I said; 'I'm hanged afraid of those calms!' 'Well, well, sir,' said he, not liking just to shake me off at once, after my proving less of a ninny in sea matters than he had supposed, 'these long currents never set right ashore; even if we lose the wind, as we may soon, why, she'll take off into the eddy seaward, sir, if you *must* know—the dead-water in-shore, and the ebb-tide, always give it a safe turn!'

"All this, of course, was as much to satisfy himself as me. 'Well, that's delightful,' said I, as if quite contented, and Mr Finch walked away hastily down one of the poop-ladders, no doubt glad to get rid of me in a decent manner, though I saw him next minute glancing in at the compass-boxes.

"'Keep her up to her course, sirrah; luff, d'ye hear,' said he to Jacobs, who was, perhaps, the best helmsman aboard. 'She falls off tremendous bad, sir,' answered Jacobs, with another whirl of the spokes; her want of actual headway making the Indiaman *sag* dead away to leeward, as she shoved into the force of the sea-stream, running more and more direct upon her starboard bow. One minute the courses would sink in with a long sighing fall to the lower-masts, the next her top-sails would flutter almost aback, and the heat even in the shadow of her awnings was extreme, yet she still seemed to have a breeze through the white glare aloft. I was determined to bring things to a point somehow or other, so I followed the mate down the steps. 'Oh, by-the-by, Mr Finch!' said I eagerly, 'suppose one of those dreadful—what

do you call 'em?—ah, tornadoes—were to come on! I understand this is just the way, near Africa—baffling breeze—heat suffocating—hazy atmosphere—long swell—and current rising to the surface!’

“At this Finch stood up in a perfect fury. ‘What the devil d’ye mean, sir,’ said he, ‘by dodging me about the decks in this fashion, with these infernally foolish questions of yours?’ ‘Oh, my fine fellow,’ thought I, ‘you shall settle with me for that.’ ‘Tornadoes never blow hereabouts, except off-shore, if you *must* know, sir!’ he rapped out, sticking his hands in his jacket-pockets as he said so, and taking a turn on the quarter-deck. ‘That’s quite a mistake, I assure you, sir!’ said I, carried away with the spirit of the thing; ‘I’ve seen the contrary fifty times over, and, from the look of the sky aloft just now, I’d bet——’ Here I stopped, recollected myself, put the top of my cane in my mouth, and peered under the awning at the sea with my eyes half-shut, as sleepily as usual with my messmates the cadets. The chief officer, however, stepped back in surprise, eyed me sharply, and seemed struck with a sudden thought. ‘Why, sir,’ said he, rather anxiously, ‘who may—what can *you* know of the matter?’ ‘Pooh!’ replied I, seeing some of the passengers were coming on deck, ‘I’m only of an inquiring turn of mind! You seafaring persons, Mr Finch, think we can’t get any of that kind of knowledge on land; but if you look into Johnson’s Dictionary, why, you’ll find the whole thing under the word Tornado: ’twas one of the pieces I’d to get by heart before they’d admit me into our yacht-club—along with Falconer’s *Shipwreck*, you know!’ ‘Indeed!’ said the mate, slowly, with a curl of his lip, and overhauling me from head to foot and up again; ‘ah, indeed! That was the way, was it, sir?’ I saw ’twas no use. I daresay he caught the twinkle in my eye; while Jacobs’ face, behind him, was like the knocker on a door with trying to screw it tight over his quid, and stuffing the knot of his neckerchief in his mouth.

“‘Of course, sir,’ answered I, letting my voice fall; ‘and the long and the short of it is, Mr Finch, the sooner you get your ship out of this current the better! And what’s more, sir, I daresay I could tell you *how*!’

“Whether he was waiting for what I’d to say, or thinking of something just occurred to him, was doubtful: he still gazed

steadily at me, without saying a word; so I went on. 'You must know I had an old uncle who was long in His Majesty's Royal Navy, and if there was one point he was crazy upon, 'twas just this very matter of currents—though, for my part, Mr Finch, I really never understood what he meant till I made a voyage. He used to tell my mother, poor woman—who always fancied they had somewhat to do with puddings—that he'd seen no less than half-a-dozen ships go on shore, owing to currents. Now, Jane, he'd say, when you're fairly in a current, never you try to cross out of it, as folks often do, *against* the run of it, for in that case, unless the wind's strong enough, why, instead of striking the eddy to take your craft right off-shore, it'll just set you over and over to the *inside*. You'll cross, in the end, no doubt—but ten to one it's exactly where the water begins to shoal; whereas, the right plan's as simple as daylight, and that's why so few know it! Look ye, he'd say, always you cross *with* the stream—no matter though your head seems to make landward; why, the fact is, it'll just set you outside of itself, clear into its own bight, when you can run off to seaward with the eddy, if ye choose. *That's* the way to cross a current, my uncle used to say, provided you've but a light wind for handling her with! Now, Mr, Finch,' added I, coolly, and still mouthing my stick as before—for I couldn't help wishing to give the conceited fellow a rub, while I lent him a hint—for my own part, I can't know much of these things, but it *does* seem to me as if my uncle's notions pretty well suited the case in hand!'

"Finch was too much of a fair seaman not to catch my drift at once, but in too great a passion to own it at the time. 'D'ye think, sir,' said he, with a face like fire, 'so much sense as there is in this long rigmarole of yours, that I'm such a—that's to say, that I didn't know it before, sir? But what I've got to do with *you*, Mr Collinson, or whatever your name may be—you may have been at sea twenty years, for aught I care—but I'd like to know *why* you come aboard here, and give yourself out for as raw a greenhorn as ever touched ropes with a kid glove?' 'Well, Mr Finch,' said I, 'and what's that to you, if I choose to be as green as the North Sea whaling-ground?' 'Why, sir,' said Finch, working himself up, 'you're devilish cunning, no doubt, but perhaps you're

not aware that a passenger under a false rig, in an Indiaman, may be clapped in limbo, if the captain thinks fit? Who and what are you, I ask?—some runaway master's mate, I suppose, unless you've got something deeper in hand! Perhaps,' ended he, with a sneer, 'a pickpocket in disguise?' 'Sir,' said I, getting up off the bulwark I'd been leaning upon, 'at present I choose to be a cadet, but at any rate, you shall make an apology for what you said just now, sir!' 'Apology!' said the mate turning on his heel, 'I shan't do anything of the sort! You may be thankful, in the meantime, if I don't have you locked up below, that's all! Perhaps, by-the-by, sir, all you wanted was to show off your seamanship before the young lady in the round-house there?' Here the glance the fellow gave me was enough to show he knew pretty well, all the while, what we were matched against each other for.

"I could stand this no longer, of course; but, seeing that one or two of the passengers were noticing us from the poop, I looked as polite as is possible to do when you've lost your temper; and, in fact, the whole disappointment of this hair-brained cruise of mine—not to speak of a few things one had to stand—carried me away at the moment. There was no scheme I wouldn't rather have been suspected of, by this time, than the real one—namely, having gone in chase of Violet Hyde. I took a card out of my pocket and handed it quietly to Mr Finch. 'You don't seem able to name me, sir,' said I. 'However, I give you my word, you may trust that bit of pasteboard for it; and as I take you to be a gentleman by your place in this ship, why, I shall expect the satisfaction one gentleman should give another, the first time we get ashore, although it *should* be to-morrow morning! And, by Jove!' thought I, 'I hope I'm done with the most foolish trick ever a fellow played himself! The man that ventures to call me *green* again, or look at me as if he wanted to cool his eyes, hang me if he shan't answer for it! As for a woman,' thought I, but, oh, those two blue eyes yonder—confound it! as I caught sight of a white muslin skirt in the shade of the poop-awning above.

"I must say, for Finch, he took my last move coolly enough, turning round to give me another look, after glancing at the card. 'Indeed!' said he, as if rather surprised; 'well, sir, I'm your man for *that*, though it can't be just as soon as to—

morrow morning! A Company's officer may meet a lieutenant in the Navy any time—ay, and take his ship off the land too, I hope, sir!’ and with that he walked off forward. ‘Lieutenant!’ said I to myself; ‘how did he give me my commission so pat, I wonder?’ and I pulled out another card, when I found, to my great annoyance, that in my hurry that morning I had happened to put on a coat of Westwood's by mistake, and instead of plain ‘Mr Collins,’ they were all ‘Lieutenant Westwood, R.N.’ ‘Here's another confounded mess!’ thought I, ‘and all will be blown in the end!’ However, on second thoughts, the notion struck me, that, by sticking to the name, as I must do *now* at any rate, why, I should keep Westwood clear of all scrapes, which, in *his* case, might be disagreeable enough; whereas, at present, he was known only as the Reverend Mr Thomas—and, as for *his* either shamming the griffin, or giving hints how to work the ship, he was one of those men you'd scarce know for a sailor, by aught in his manner, at least: and, indeed, Tom Westwood always seemed to need a whole frigate's ways about him, with perhaps somewhat of a stir, to show what he really was.

“Five minutes or so after this, it didn't certainly surprise me much to see the Indiaman laid on the opposite tack, with her head actually north-by-east, or within a few points of where the light haze faded into the sky: the mate seeming by this time to see the matter clearly, and quietly making his own of it. The ship began to stand over towards the outer set of the current, which could now be seen rippling along here and there to the surface, as the breeze fell slowly: you heard nothing save the faint splash of it astern under one counter, the wafting and rustling of her large main-course above the awnings, for she was covered over like a caravan—the slight flap of her jibs far ahead on the bowsprit startled you now and then as distinctly as if you got a fillip on your own nose; the stunsail, high up beside the weather-leech of her foretopsail, hung slack over the boom, and one felt each useless jolt of the wheel like a foot-slip in loose sand when you want to run—all betwixt the lazy, listless voices of the passengers, dropping and dropping as separate as the last sands in an hour-glass. Still, every minute of air aloft helped her nearer to where you saw the water winding about the horizon in long swathes, as it were, bluer than the rest, and swelling

brimful, so to speak, out of a line of light; with the long dents and bits of ripple here and there creeping towards it, till the whole round of the surface, as far as you could see, came out into the smooth, like the wrinkles on a nutmeg.

"Four bells of the afternoon watch had struck—two o'clock, that is—when Rickett, the third mate, and one or two men, went out to the arm of the spritsail-yard across the bowsprit, where they lowered away a heavy pitch-pot with a long strip of yellow bunting made fast to it, and weighted a little at the loose end, to mark the *set* of the current; and as the pot sank away out on her larboard bow, one could see the bright-coloured rag deep down through the clear blue water, streaming almost fairly *north*. She appeared to be nearing the turn of the eddy, and the chief officer's spirits began to rise. Rickett screwed one eye close, and looked out under his horny palm with the other, doubtful, as he said, that we should 'sight the land off-deck before that. As for this trifle of an air aloft, sir,' said he, 'I'm afraid we won't——' 'Hoot, Mr Reckett,' put in Macleod, stepping one of his long trouser-legs down from over the quarter-deck awning, like an ostrich that had been aloft, 'ye're aye afraid; but it's not easy to see aloft, Mr Fench, sir.' 'How does the land lie *now*, Mr Macleod?' asked the first officer. 'Well, I wouldn't wonder but we soon dropped it, sir—that's to *east'ard*, I mean,' replied he; 'though it's what we call a bit mountainous, in Scotland—not that unlike the Grampians, Mr Fench, ye know!' 'Hang your Grampians, man!—what's *ahead* of us, eh?' said the mate hastily. 'Why, sir,' said the Scotchman, 'there *is* some more of it on the nor'-east, lower a good deal—its just flush with the water from here, at present, Mr Fench—with a peak or two, trending away too'ard north; but the light yonder on our starboard bow makes them hard for to see, I may say.'

"In fact, some of the men forward were making it out already on the starboard bow, where you could see the faint ragged shape of a headland coming out, as it were, of the dazzle beyond the water, which lay flickering and heaving between, from deep-blue far away into pale; while almost at the same time, on her starboard quarter, where there was less of the light, another outline was to be seen looming like pretty high land, though still fainter than the first. As for

the space betwixt them, for aught one could distinguish as yet, there might be nothing *there* except air and water over against the ship's side.

“‘Well,’ said the mate briskly, after a little, ‘we’re pretty sure, *now*, to have the land-breeze to give us sea-room, before two or three hours are over—by which time, I hope we’ll be in the eddy of this infernal current, at any rate!’ However, I was scarce sure he didn’t begin to doubt the plan I’d given him; whereas had he known the whole case in time, and done the thing *then*, it was certain enough—and the best thing he could do, even as it was: but what troubled me now, why, suppose anything happened to the ship, mightn’t he turn the tables on me after all, and say I had some bad design in it? I loitered about with my arms folded, saying never a word, but watching the whole affair keener than I ever did one of Shakspeare’s plays in the theatre after a dull cruise; not a thing in sea, sky, or Indiaman, from the ripples far off on the water to ugly Harry hauling taut the jib-sheet with his chums, but somehow or other they seemed all to sink *into* me at the time, as if they’d all got to come *out* again strong. You hardly knew *when* the ship lost the last breath of air aloft, till, from stealing through the smooth water, she came apparently to a standstill, everything spread broad out, not even a flap in the canvas almost, it had fallen a dead calm so gradually.

“However, *my* troubles weren’t seemingly over yet, for just then up came the judge’s dark kitmagar to the gangway where I was, and, from the sly impudence of the fellow’s manner, I at once fancied there was something particular in the wind, as if he’d been seeking me about-decks. ‘S’laam, mistree!’ said he, with but a slight duck of his flat brown turban, ‘Judge sahib i-send Culley Mistree his chupprass’—*message*, forsooth!—‘sah’b inquire the flavour of gentlyman’s Ees-Inchee Coompanee, two-three moment!’ ‘The flavour of my East-India Company, you rascal!’ said I, laughing, yet inclined to kick him aft again for his impertinent look; ‘speak for yourself, if you please!’

“In fact, the whiff of cocoa-nut oil, and other dark perfumes about him, came out in a hot calm at sea, when everything sickens one, as to need no inquiry about the matter; however, I walked straight aft to the round-house, and in at the open

door, through which Sir Charles was to be seen pacing from one side of his cabin to the other, like a Bengal tiger in a cage. 'Harkye, young man,' said he sternly, turning as soon as I came in, with my hat in my hand, 'since I had the honour of your company here this morning, I have recollected—indeed, I find that one of my servants had done the same—that you are the person who molested my family by various annoyances beside my garden at Croydon, sir!' 'Indeed, Sir Charles!' said I coolly, for the bitter feeling I had made me cool: 'they must have been unintentional then, sir! But I was certainly at Croydon, seeing my mother's house happens to be there.' 'You must have had some design in entering this vessel, sir!' continued the judge, in a passion: 'gad, sir, the coincidence is too curious! Tell me what it is at once, or by——' 'My design was to go to India, sir,' answered I, as quietly as before. 'In what capacity?—who are you?—what—who—what do you want *there*, eh?' rapped out the judge. 'I'm not aware, sir,' said I, 'what right you've got to question me; but I—in fact, I'll tell *so* much to any man—why, I'm an officer in the Navy.'

"Sir Charles brought short up in his pacing and stamping, and stared at me. 'An officer in the Navy!' repeated he; 'but yes—why, now I think, I do remember something in your dress, sir—though it was the *face* that struck me! In short then, sir, this makes the case worse: you are here on false pretences—affecting the very reverse, sir—setting yourself up for a model of simplicity,—a laughing-stock indeed!' 'I had reasons for not wishing my profession to be known, Sir Charles,' said I; 'most special reasons. They're now over, however, and I don't care *who* knows it!' 'May I ask what these were?' said the judge. '*That* I'll never tell to any man breathing!' I said determinedly.

"The judge walked two or three times fore and aft; then a thought seemed to strike him—he looked out as if at the decks and through below the awnings, then shut the door and came back to me again. 'By-the-way,' said he seriously, and changing his tone, 'since this extraordinary acknowledgment of yours, sir, something occurs to me which makes me almost think your presence in the vessel in one sense opportune. I have reason to entertain a high opinion of naval officers as technical men, professionally educated in His

Majesty's regular service, and—you look rather a *young* man—but have you had much experience, may I ask?' 'I have been nine or ten years at sea, sir,' replied I, a little taken aback, 'in various parts of the world!' 'I have some suspicion lately,' he went on, 'that this vessel is not navigated in a—in short, that at present, probably, we may be in some danger—do *you* think so, sir?' 'No, Sir Charles,' said I, 'I don't think she *is*, as matters stand—only in a troublesome sort of quarter, which the sooner she's out of the better.' 'The commander is, I find, dangerously unwell,' continued he, 'and of the young man who seems to have the chief care of the vessel, I have no very high—well—*that*, of course I — Now, sir,' said he, looking intently at me, 'are *you* capable of—in short, of managing this Company's vessel, should any emergency arise? I have seen such, myself—and in the circumstances I feel considerable alarm—uneasiness, at least— Eh, sir?' 'Depend upon it, Sir Charles,' I said, stepping toward the door, 'in any matter of the kind I'll do my best for this ship! But none knows so well as a seaman, there are cases enough where your very best can't do much!'

"The judge seemed rather startled by my manner—for I *did* feel a little misgiving, from something in the weather on the whole; at any rate I fancied there was a cold-bloodedness in every sharp corner of his face, bilious though his temper was, that would have let him see *me* go to the bottom a thousand times over, had I even had a chance with his daughter herself, ere he'd have yielded me the tip of her little finger: accordingly 'twas a satisfaction to me, at the moment, just to make him see he wasn't altogether in his nabob's chair in Bengal yet, on an elephant's back.

"'Ah, though!' said he, raising his voice to call me back, 'to return for an instant—there is one thing I must positively require, sir—which you will see, in the circumstances, to be unavoidable. As a mere simple cadet, observe, sir, there was nothing to be objected to in a slight passing acquaintance—but, especially in the—in short, equivocal—sir, I must request of you that you will on no account attempt to hold any communication with my daughter, Miss Hyde—beyond a mere bow, of course! 'Twill be disagreeable, I assure you. Indeed, I shall——' 'Sir,' said I, all the blood in my body going to my face, 'of all things in the world, *that* is the very

thing where your views and mine happen to square!’ and I bowed.

“The man’s coolness disgusted me, sticking such a thing in my teeth, after just reckoning on my services with the very same breath—and all when it wasn’t required, too! And by Heaven! thought I, had *she* shown me favour, all the old nabobs in Christendom, and the whole world to boot, shouldn’t hinder me from speaking to her! What I said apparently puzzled him, but he gave me a grand bow in his turn, and I had my hand on the door, when he said, ‘I suppose, sir, as a naval officer, you have no objection to give me your name and rank. I forget what——’ Here I remembered my mistake with the mate, and on the whole I saw I must stick by it till I was clear of the whole concern; as for *saying* my name was Westwood, that I couldn’t have done at the time for worlds; but I quietly handed him another card, meaning, of course, to give Westwood the cue as shortly as possible, for his own safety. The judge started on seeing the card, gave me one of his sharp glances, and made a sudden step towards me. ‘Have you any relation in India, Mr Westwood?’ said he, slowly, to which I gave only a nod. ‘What is he, if I may inquire?’ asked he again. ‘A councillor or something, I believe,’ said I, carelessly. ‘*Thomas Westwood?*’ said Sir Charles. ‘Ah,’ said I, wearied of the thing, and anxious to go. ‘An uncle, probably, from the age?’ he still put in. ‘Exactly, that’s it!’ I said. ‘Why—what!—why did you not mention this at first?’ he broke out suddenly, coming close up; ‘why, Councillor Westwood is my very oldest friend in India, my dear sir! This alters the matter. I should have welcomed a nephew of his in my house, to the utmost! Why, how strange, Mr Westwood, that the fact should emerge in this curious manner!’ and with that he held out his hand. ‘Of course,’ said he, ‘no such restriction as I mentioned could for a moment apply to a nephew of Councillor Westwood!’

“I stared at him for a moment, and then—‘Sir,’ said I, coolly, ‘it seems the whole matter goes by names; but if my name were the devil or the Apostle Paul, I don’t see how it can make a bit of difference in *me*: what’s more, sir,’ said I, setting my teeth, ‘*whatever* my name may be, depend upon it, I shall never claim acquaintance either with you or—or—Miss Hyde!’ With that I flung straight out of the cabin,

leaving the old gentleman bolt upright on the floor, and as dumb as a stock-fish, whether with rage or amazement I never stopped to think.

"I went right forward on the Indiaman's forecastle, clear of all the awnings, dropped over her head out of sight of the men, and sat with my legs amongst the open woodwork beneath the bowsprit, looking at the calm—nobody in sight but the Hindoo figure, who seemed to be doing the same. *Westwood!* thought I, bitterly; then in a short time, when the mistake's found out, and he got safe past the Cape, perhaps—it'll be nothing but *Westwood!* He'll have a clear stage, and all favour; but at any rate, *however* it may be, *I'll* not be here, by Heaven, to see it. That cursed councillor of his, I suppose, is another nabob—and no doubt he'll marry her, all smooth! Uncles—I little thought, by Jove! when I knocked off that yarn to the mate about *my* uncle—but, after all, it's strange how often a fellow's paid back in his own coin!

"The heat at the time was unbearable—*heat*, indeed! 'twasn't only heat—but a heavy, close, stifling sort of feeling, like in a hot-house, as if you'd got a weight on your head and every other bit of you: the water one time so dead-blue and glassy between the windings of it, that the sky seemed to vanish, and the ship looked floating up into where *it* was—then again you scarce knew sea from air, except by the wrinkles and eddies running across each other between, toward a sullen blue ring at the horizon—like seeing through a big twisted sieve, or into a round looking-glass all over cracks. I heard them clue up everything aloft, except the topsails—and *they* fell slapping back and forward to the masts, every now and then with a *thud* like a thousand spades clapped down at once over a hollow bit of ground—till all seemed as still between as if they'd buried something. I wished to Heaven it were what I *felt* at the time, and the thought of Violet Hyde, that I might be as if I never had seen her—when on glancing up betwixt the figure-head and the ship's stern, it struck me to notice how much the land on her starboard bow and beam seemed to have risen, even during the last hour, and that without wind; partly on account of its clearing in that quarter, perhaps; but the nearest points looked here and there almost as if you could

see into them, roughening barer out through the hue of the distance, like purple blotches spreading in it. Whereas, far away astern of us, when I crossed over her headworks, there were two or three thin white streaks of haze to be seen just on the horizon, one upon another, above which you made out somewhat like a dim range of peaked land, trending one couldn't say how far back—all showing how fairly the coast was shutting her in upon the south-east, as she set farther in-shore, even while the run of the current bade fair to take her well clear of it ahead; which was, of course, all we need care for at present. Her want of steerage-way, however, let the Indiaman sheer hither and thither, till at times one was apt to get confused, and suppose her more in with the land-loom than she really was. Accordingly the mate proved his good judgment by having a couple of boats lowered with a tow-line, to keep her at least stern-on to the current, although the trouble of getting out the launch would have more served his purpose, and the deeper loaded the better, since in fact there were *two* favourable drifts instead of one, between every stroke of the oars. The men pulled away rather sulkily, their straw hats over their noses, the dip of the hawser scarce tautening at each strain, as they squinted up at the *Seringapatam's* idle figure-head. For my part I had thought it better to leave him by himself, and go below.

CHAPTER XIV

“WHEN I went into the cuddy, more for relief's sake than to dine, the passengers were chattering and talking away round the tables, hot and choking though it was, in high glee because the land was in sight from the starboard port-window, and they fancied the officers had changed their minds as to ‘touching’ there. Every now and then a cadet or two would start up, with their silver forks in their hands, and put their heads out; some asked whether the anchor had been seen getting ready or not; others disputed about the colour of tropical trees, if they were actually green like English ones, or perhaps all over blossoms and fruit together—the whole of them evidently expecting bands of negroes to line the shore as we came in.

"One young fellow had taken a particular fancy to have an earthworm, with earth enough to feed it all the rest of the voyage, otherwise he couldn't stand it; and little Tommy's mother almost went into hysterics again when she said, if she could just eat a lettuce salad once more, she'd die contented; the missionary looking up through his spectacles, in surprise that she wasn't *more* interested about the slave-trade, whereof he'd been talking to her. As for Westwood, he joined quietly in the fun, with a glance now and then across to me; however, I pretended to be too busy with the salt beef, and was merely looking up again for a moment, when my eye chanced to catch on the swinging barometer that hung in the raised skylight, right over the midst of our noise. By George! ma'am, what was my horror when I saw the quicksilver had sunk so far below the mark, probably fixed there that morning, as to be almost shrunk in the ball! Whatever the merchant service might know about the instrument in those days, the African coast was the place to teach its right use to us in the old *Iris*. I laid down my knife and fork as carelessly as I could, and went straight on deck.

"Here I sought out the mate, who was forward, watching the land—and at once took him aside to tell him the fact. 'Well, sir,' said he coolly, 'and what of that? A sign of wind, certainly, before very long; but in the meantime we're *sure* to have it off the land.' 'That's one of the very reasons,' said I, 'for thinking *this* will be from seaward—since towards evening the land 'll have plenty of air without it! But more than that, sir,' said I, 'I tell you, Mr Finch, I know the west coast of Africa pretty well—and so far south as this, the glass falling so low as *twenty-seven*, is always the sign of a nor'-westerly blow! If you're a wise man, sir, you'll not only get your upper spars down on deck, but you'll see your anchors clear!' Finch had plainly got furious at my meddling again, and said he, 'Instead of that, sir, I shall hold on *everything* aloft, to stand out when I get the breeze!' 'D'ye really think, then,' said I, pointing to the farthest-off streak of land, trending away by this time astern of us, faint as it was, 'do you think you could ever weather that point, with anything like a strong nor'-wester, besides a current heading you in, as you got fair hold of it again?' 'Perhaps not,' said he, wincing a little as he glanced at it; 'but you

happen always to suppose what there's a thousand to one against, sir. Why, sir, you might as well take the command at once. But, sir, if it *did* come to that, I'd rather—I'd rather see the ship *lost*—I'd rather go to the bottom with all in her, after handling her as I know well how, than I'd see the chance given to *you*!' The young fellow fairly shouted this last word into my very ear—he was in a regular furious passion. 'You'd *better* let me alone, that's all I've got to say to you, sir!' growled he as he turned away; so I thought it no use to say more, and leant over the bulwarks, resolved to see it out.

"The fact was, the farther we got off the land *now*, the worse, seeing that if what I dreaded should prove true, why, we were probably in thirty or forty fathoms of water, where no anchor could hold for ten minutes' time—if it ever caught ground. My way would have been to get every boat out at once, and tow in till you could see the colour of some shoal or other from aloft, then take my chance there to ride out whatever might come, to the last cable aboard of us. Accordingly I wasn't sorry to see that by this time the whole bight of the coast was slowly rising off our beam betwixt the high land far astern and the broad bluffs upon her starboard bow; which last came out already of a sandy reddish tint, and the lower part of a clear blue, as the sun got westward on our other side. What struck me was, that the face of the water, which was all over wrinkles and winding lines, with here and there a quick ripple, when I went below, had got on a sudden quite smooth as far as you could see, as if they'd sunk down like so many eels; a long uneasy ground-swell was beginning to heave in from seaward, on which the ship rose; once or twice I fancied I could observe the colour different away towards the land, like the muddy chocolate spreading out near a river-mouth at ebb-tide—then again it was green, rather; and as for the look of the coast, I had no knowledge of it. I thought again, certainly, of the old quartermaster's account in the *Iris*, but there was neither anything like it to be seen, nor any sign of a break in the coast at all, though high headlands enough.

"The ship might have been about twelve or fourteen miles from the north-east point upon her starboard bow, a high rocky range of bluffs—and rather less from the nearest of what lay away off her beam; but after this you could mark nothing more, except it were that she edged farther from the

point, by the way its bearings shifted or got blurred together: either she stood still, or she'd caught some eddy or under-rift, and the mate walked about quite lively once more. The matter was how to breathe, or bear your clothes—when all of a sudden I heard the second mate sing out from the forecastle—'Stand by the braces, there! Look out for the topes'l hawl-yairds!'

"He came shuffling aft next moment as fast as his foundered old shanks could carry him, and told Mr Finch there was a squall coming off the land. The mate sprang up on the bulwarks, and so did I—catching a glance from him as much as to say—There's your gale from seaward, you pretentious lubber! The lowest streak of coast bore at present before our starboard quarter, betwixt east and south-east'ard, with some pretty high land running away up from it, and a sort of dim blue haze hanging beyond, as 'twere. Just as Macleod spoke, I could see a dusky dark vapour thickening and spreading in the haze, till it rose black along the flat, out of the sky behind it; whitened and then darkened again, like a heavy smoke floating up into the air. All was confusion on deck for a minute or two—off went all the awnings—and every hand was ready at his station, fisting the ropes; when I looked again at the cloud, then at the mates. '*By George!*' said I, noticing a pale wreath of it go curling on the pale clear sky over it, as if to a puff of air, '*it is smoke!* Some niggers, as they often do, burning the bush!'

"So it was; and as soon as Finch gave in, all hands quietly coiled up the ropes. It was scarce five minutes after, that Jacobs, who was coiling up a rope beside me, gave me a quiet touch with one finger. '*Mr Collins, sir,*' said he in a low voice, looking almost right up, high over toward the ship's larboard bow, which he couldn't have done before, for the awnings so lately above us, '*look, sir—there's an ox-eye!*' I followed his gaze, but it wasn't for a few seconds that I found what it pointed to, in the hot far-off-like blue dimness of the sky overhead, compared with the white glare of which to westward our canvas aloft was but dirty grey and yellow.

"'Twas what none but a seaman would have observed, and many a seaman wouldn't have done so—but a man-o'-war's-man is used to look out at all hours, in all latitudes—and to a man that knew its meaning, *this* would have been no joke,

even out of sight of land ; as it was, the thing gave me a perfect thrill of dread. High aloft in the heavens northward, where they were freest from the sun—now standing over the open horizon amidst a wide bright pool of light—you managed to discern a small silvery speck, growing slowly, as it were, out of the faint blue hollow, like a star in the daytime, till you felt as if it *looked* at you, from God knows what distance away. One eye after another amongst the mates and crew joined Jacobs' and mine, with the same sort of dumb fellowship to be seen when a man in London streets watches the top of a steeple ; and however hard to make out at first, ere long none of them could miss seeing it, as it got slowly larger, sinking by degrees till the sky close about it seemed to thicken like a dusky ring round the white, and the sunlight upon our seaward quarter blazed out doubly strong—as if it came dazzling off a brass bell, with the bright tongue swinging in it far off to one side, where the hush made you think of a stroke back upon us, with some terrific sound to boot.

“The glassy water by this time was beginning to rise under the ship with a struggling kind of unequal heave, as if a giant you couldn't see kept shoving it down here and there with both hands, and it came swelling up elsewhere.

“To north-westward or thereabouts, betwixt the sun and this ill-boding token aloft, the far line of open sea still lay shining motionless and smooth ; next time you looked, it had got even brighter than before, seeming to leave the horizon visibly ; then the streak of air just above it had grown grey, and a long hedge of hazy vapour was creeping as it were over from beyond—the white speck all the while travelling down towards it slantwise from nor'ard, and spreading its dark ring slowly out into a circle of cloud, till the keen eye of it at last sank in, and below, as well as aloft, the whole north-western quarter got blurred together in one gloomy mass. If there was a question at first whether the wind mightn't come from so far nor'ard as to give her a chance of running out to sea before it, there was none now—our sole recourse lay either in getting nearer the land meanwhile, to let go our anchors ere it came on, with her head *to* it—or we might make a desperate trial to weather the lee-point now far astern. The fact was, we were going to have a regular tornado, and that of the worst

kind, which wouldn't soon blow itself out; though near an hour's notice would probably pass ere it was on.

"The three mates laid their heads gravely together over the capstan for a minute or two, after which Finch seemed to perceive that the first of the two ways was the safer; though, of course, the nearer we should get to the land, the less chance there was of clearing it afterwards, should her cables part, or the anchors drag. The two boats still alongside, and two others dropped from the davits, were manned at once and set to towing the Indiaman ahead, in-shore; while the bower and sheet anchors were got out to the cat-heads ready for letting go, cables overhauled, ranged, and clinched as quickly as possible, and the deep-sea lead passed along to take soundings every few minutes.

"On we crept, slow as death, and almost as still, except the jerk of the oars from the heaving water at her bows, and the loud flap of the big topsails now and then, everything aloft save them and the brailed foresail being already close furled; the clouds all the while rising away along our larboard beam nor'-west and north, over the grey bank on the horizon, till once more you could scarce say which point the wind would come from, unless by the huge purple heap of vapour in the midst. The sun had got low, and he shivered his dazzling spokes of light behind one edge of it, as if 'twere a mountain you saw over some coast or other; indeed, you'd have thought the ship almost shut in by land on both sides of her, which was what seemed to terrify the passengers most, as they gathered about the poop-stairs and watched it—*which* was the true land and which the clouds, 'twas hard to say—and the sea gloomed writhing between them like a huge lake in the mountains.

"I saw Sir Charles Hyde walk out of the round-house and in again, glancing uneasily about; his daughter was standing with another young lady, gazing at the land; and at sight of her sweet, curious face, I'd have given worlds to be able to do something that might save it from the chance, possibly, of being that very night dashed amongst the breakers on a lee-shore in the dark—or at best, suppose the Almighty favoured any of us so far, perhaps landed in the wilds of Africa. Had there been aught man could do more, why, though I never should get a smile for it, I'd have compassed it, mate or no

mate ; but all was done that could be done, and I had nothing to say. Westwood came near her, too, apparently seeing our bad case at last to some extent, and both trying to break it to her and to assure her mind ; so I folded my arms again, and kept my eyes hard fixed upon the bank of cloud, as some new weather-mark stole out in it, and the sea stretched breathless away below, like new melted lead.

“The air was like to choke you—or rather there was none—as if water, sky, and everything else wanted *life*, and one would fain have caught the first rush of the tornado into his mouth—the men emptying the dipper on deck from the cask, from sheer loathing. As for the land, it seemed to draw nearer of itself, till every point and wrinkle in the headland off our bow came out in a red coppery gleam—one saw the white line of surf round it, and some blue country beyond like indigo ; then back it darkened again, and all aloft was getting livid-like over the bare royal mast-heads.

“Suddenly, a faint air was felt to flutter from landward ; it half lifted the topsails, and a heavy earthy smell came into your nostrils—the first of the land-breeze, at last ; but by this time it was no more than a sort of mockery, while a minute after you might catch a low, sullen, moaning sound far off through the emptiness, from the strong surf the Atlantic sends in upon the west coast before a squall. If ever landsmen found out what land on the wrong side is, the passengers of the *Seringapatam* did, that moment ; the shudder of the topsails aloft seemed to pass into everyone’s shoulders, and a few quietly walked below, as if they were safe in their cabins. I saw Violet Hyde look round and round with a startled expression, and from one face to another, till her eye lighted on me, and I fancied for a moment it was like putting some question to me. I couldn’t bear it!—’twas the first time I’d felt powerless to offer anything ; though the thought ran through me again till I almost felt myself buffeting among the breakers with her in my arms. I looked to the land, where the smoke we had seen three-quarters of an hour ago, rose again with the puff of air, a slight flicker of flame in it, as it wreathed off the low ground toward the higher point—when all at once I gave a start, for something in the shape of the whole struck me as if I’d seen it before.

"Next moment I was thinking of old Bob Martin's particular landmarks at the river-mouth he spoke of, and the notion of its possibly being hereabouts glanced on me like a godsend. In the unsure dusky sight I had of it, certainly, it wore somewhat of that look, and it lay fair to leeward of the weather; while, as for the dead shut-in appearance of it, old Bob had specially said you'd never think it was a river; but then again it was more like a desperate fancy owing to our hard case, and to run the ship straight for it would be the trick of a Bedlamite. At any rate, a quick cry from aft turned me round, and I saw a blue flare of lightning streak out betwixt the bank of grey haze and the cloud that hung over it—then another, and the clouds were beginning to rise slowly in the midst, leaving a white glare between, as if you could see through it towards what was coming. The men could pull no longer, but ahead of the ship there was now only about eight or ten fathoms water, with a soft bottom. The boats were hoisted in, and the men had begun to clue up and hand the topsails, which were lowered on the caps, when, just in the midst of the hubbub and confusion, as I stood listening to every order the mate gave, the steward came up hastily from below to tell him that the captain had woke up, and, being much better, wanted to see him immediately. Mr Finch looked surprised, but he turned at once, and hurried down the hatchway.

"The sight which all of us who weren't busy gazed upon, over the larboard bulwarks, was terrible to see: 'twas half dark, though the sun dropping behind the haze-bank, made it glimmer and redden. The dark heap of clouds had first lengthened out blacker and blacker, and was rising slowly in the sky like a mighty arch, till you saw their white edges below, and a ghastly white space behind, out of which the mist and scud began to fly. Next minute a long sigh came into her jib and foresail, then the black bow of cloud partly sank again, and a blaze of lightning came out all round her, showing you every face on deck, the inside of the round-house aft, with the Indian judge standing in it, his hand to his eyes—and the land far away, to the very swell rolling into it. Then the thunder broke overhead in the gloom, in one fearful sudden crack, that you seemed to hear through every corner of cabins and forecastle below—and the wet back-fins of

twenty sharks or so, that had risen out of the inky surface, vanished as suddenly.

"The Indiaman had sheered almost broadside on to the clouds, her jib was still up, and I knew the next time the clouds *rose* we should fairly have it. Flash after flash came, and clap after clap of thunder, *such* as you hear before a tornado—yet the chief officer wasn't to be seen, and the others seemed uncertain what to do first; while everyone began to wonder and pass along questions where he could be. In fact, he had disappeared. For my part, I thought it very strange he stayed so long; but there wasn't a moment to lose. I jumped down off the poop-stairs, walked forward on the quarter-deck, and said coolly to the men nearest me, 'Run and haul down that jib yonder—set the spanker here, aft. You'll have her taken slap on her beam: quick, my lads!' The men did so at once. Macleod was calling out anxiously for Mr Finch. 'Stand by the anchors there!' I sang out, 'to let go the starboard one, the *moment* she swings head to wind!' The Scotch mate turned his head; but Rickett's face, by the next flash, showed he saw the good of it, and there was no leisure for arguing, especially as I spoke in a way to be heard. I walked to the wheel, and got hold of Jacobs to take the weather helm.

"We were all standing ready, at the pitch of expecting it. Westwood, too, having appeared again by this time beside me, I whispered to him to run forward and look after the anchors—when someone came hastily up the after-hatchway, with a glazed hat and pilot-coat on, stepped straight to the binnacle, looked in behind me, then at the black bank of cloud, then aloft. Of course I supposed it was the mate again, but didn't trouble myself to glance at him further—when 'Hold on with the anchors!' he sang out in a loud voice—'hold on there for your lives!' Heavens! it was the captain himself!

"At this, of course, I stood aside at once; and he shouted again, 'Hoist the jib and fore-topmast-staysail—stand by to set fore-course!' By Jove! this was the way to pay the ship *head* off, instead of stern off, from the blast when it came—and to let her drive before it at no trifle of a rate, wherever *that* might take her! 'Down with that spanker, Mr Macleod, d'ye hear?' roared Captain Williamson again; and, certainly, I did wonder what he meant to do with the ship. But his

manner was so decided, and 'twas so natural for the captain to strain a point to come on deck in the circumstances, that I saw he must have some trick of seamanship above *me*, or some special knowledge of the coast—and I waited in a state of the greatest excitement for the first stroke of the tornado. He waved the second and third mates forward to their posts—the Indiaman sheering and backing, like a frightened horse, to the long slight swell and the faint flaw of the land-air. The black arch to windward began to rise again, showing a terrible white stare reaching deep in, and a blue dart of lightning actually ran zig-zag down before our glaring fore-to'gallant-mast. Suddenly, the captain had looked at me, and we faced each other by the gleam; and, quiet, easy-going man as he was commonly, it just flashed across me there was something extraordinarily wild and *raised* in his pale visage, strange as the air about us made everyone appear. He gave a stride towards me, shouting, 'Who are——' when the thunder-clap took the words out of his tongue, and next moment the tornado burst upon us, fierce as the wind from a cannon's mouth.

"For one minute the *Seringapatam* heeled over to her star-board streak, almost broadside on, and her spars towards the land—all on her beam was a long ragged white gush of light and mist pouring out under the black brow of the clouds, with a trampling eddying roar up into the sky. The swell plunged over her weather-side like the first break of a dam, and as we scrambled up to the bulwarks, to hold on for bare life, you saw a roller fit to swamp us, coming on out of the sheet of foam—when crash went mizzen-topmast and main-to'gallant-mast; the ship payed swiftly off by help of her head-sails, and, with a leap like a harpooned whale, off she drove fair before the tremendous sweep of the blast.

"The least yaw in her course, and she'd have never risen, unless every stick went out of her. I laid my shoulder to the wheel with Jacobs, and Captain Williamson screamed through his trumpet into the men's ears, and waved his hands to ride down the fore-sheets as far as they'd go; which kept her right before it, though the sail could be but half set, and she rather flew than ran—the sea one breadth of white foam back to the gushes of mist, not having power to rise higher yet. Had the foresail been stretched, 'twould have blown off like

a cloud. I looked at the captain: he was standing in the lee of the round-house, straight upright, though now and then peering eagerly forward, his lips firm, one hand on a belaying-pin, the other in his breast—nothing but determination in his manner: yet once or twice he started, and glanced fiercely to the after-hatchway near, as if something from below might chance to thwart him. I can't express my contrary feelings, betwixt a sort of hope and sheer horror. We were driving right towards the land, at thirteen or fourteen knots to the hour—yet *could* there actually be some harbourage hereaway, or that said river the quartermaster of the *Iris* mentioned, and Captain Williamson know of it?

“Something struck me as wonderfully strange in the whole matter, and puzzling to desperation—still, I trusted to the captain's experience. The coast was scarce to be seen ahead of us, lying black against an uneven streak of glimmer, as she rushed like fury before the deafening howl of wind; and right away before our lee-beam I could see the light blowing, as it were, across beyond the headland I had noticed, where the smoke in the bush seemed to be still curling, half-smothered, along the flat in the lee of the hills, as if in green wood, or sheltered as yet from seaward, though once or twice a quick flicker burst up in it.

“All at once the gust of the tornado was seen to pour on it like a long blast from some huge bellows, and up it flashed—the yellow flame blazed into the smoke, spread away behind the point, and the ruddy brown smoke blew whitening over it:—when, Almighty power! what did I see as it lengthened in, but part after part of old Bob's landmarks creep out ink-black before the flare and the streak of sky together—first the low line of ground, then the notch in the block, the two rocks like steps, and the sugar-loaf shape of the headland, to the very mop-headed knot of trees on its rise! No doubt Captain Williamson was steering for it; but it was far too much on our starboard bow—and in half-an-hour at this rate we should drive right into the surf you saw running along to the coast ahead—so I signed to Jacobs for God's sake to edge her off as nicely as was possible.

“Captain Williamson caught my motion. ‘Port! port, sirrah!’ he sang out sternly; ‘*back* with the helm, d' ye hear!’ and pulling out a pistol, he levelled it at me with one hand,

while he held a second in the other. 'Land!—land!' shouted he, and from the lee of the round-house it came more like a shriek than a shout—'I'll be there though a thousand mutineers——' His eye was like a wild beast's. That moment the truth glanced across me—this was the *green leaf*, no doubt, the Scotch mate talked so mysteriously of. The man was mad! The land-fever was upon him, as I'd seen it before in men long off the African coast; and he stood eyeing me with one foot hard stamped before him. 'Twas no use trying to be heard, and the desperation of the moment gave me a thought of the sole thing to do. I took off my hat in the light of the binnacle, bowed, and looked him straight in the face with a smile—when his eye wavered, he slowly lowered his pistol, then *laughed*, waving his hand towards the land to leeward, as if, but for the gale, you'd have heard him cheer. At the instant I sprang behind him with the slack of a rope, and grappled his arms fast, though he'd got the furious power of a madman, and, during half-a-minute, 'twas wrestle for life with me. But the line was round him, arm and leg, and I made it fast, throwing him heavily on the deck, just as one of the mates, with some of the crew, were struggling aft, by help of the belaying-pins, against the hurricane, having caught a glimpse of the thing by the binnacle-light. They looked from me to the captain. The ugly top-man made a sign, as much as to say, Knock the fellow down; but the whole lot hung back before the couple of pistol-barrels I handled. The Scotch mate seemed awfully puzzled; and others of the men, who knew from Jacobs what I was, came shoving along, evidently aware what a case we were in.

"A word to Jacobs served to keep him steering her anxiously, so as to head two or three points more south-east in the *end*, furiously as the wheel jolted. So there we stood, the tornado sweeping sharp as a knife from astern over the poop-deck, with a force that threw anyone back if he left go his hold to get near me, and going up like thunder aloft in the sky. Now and then a weaker flare of lightning glittered across the scud; and, black as it was overhead, the horizon to windward was but one jagged white glare, gushing full of broad shifting streaks through the drift of foam and the spray that strove to rise. Our fore-course still held: and I took the helm from Jacobs, that he might go and manage to get a pull taken on

the starboard brace, which would not only *slant* the sail more to the blasts, but give her the better chance to make the sole point of salvation, by helping her steerage when most needed. Jacobs and Westwood together got this done ; and all the time I was keeping my eyes fixed anxiously, as man can fancy, on the last gleams of the fire ashore, as her head made a fairer line with it ; but, by little and little, it went quite out, and all was black—though I had taken its bearings by the compass—and I kept her to that for bare life, trembling at every shiver in the foresail's edge, lest either it or the mast should go.

“Suddenly, we began to get into a fearful swell—the Indian plunged and shook in every spar left her. I could see nothing ahead, from the wheel, and in the dark ; we were getting close in with the land, and the time was coming ; but still I held south-east-by-east to the mark of her head in the compass-box, as nearly as might and main could do it, for the heaves that made me think once or twice she was to strike next moment.

“If she went ashore in my hands ! why, it was like to drive one mad with fear ; and I waited for Jacobs to come back, with a brain ready to turn, almost as if I'd have left the wheel to the other helmsman, and run forward into the bows to look out. The captain lay raving and shouting behind me, though no one else could either have heard or seen him ; and where the chief officer was all this time surprised me, unless the madman had made away with him, or locked him in his own cabin, in return for being shut up himself—which, in fact, proved to be the case, cunning as it was to send for him so quietly. At length Jacobs struggled aft to me again, and charging him, for Heaven's sake, to steer exactly the course I gave, I drove before the full strength of the squall along decks to the bowsprit, where I held on and peered out. Dead ahead of us was the high line of coast in the dark—not a mile of swell between the ship and it. By this time the low boom of the surf came under the wind, and you saw the breakers lifting all along—not a single opening in them ! I had lost sight of my landmarks, and my heart gulped into my mouth—what I felt 'twould be vain to say—till I thought I *did* make out one short patch of sheer black in the range of foam, scarce so far on our bow as I'd reckoned the fire to

have been ; indeed, instead of that, it was rather on her weather than her lee bow ; and the more I watched it, and the nearer we drove in that five minutes, the broader it was. 'By all that's good!' thought I, 'if a river there is, that must be the mouth of it!' But, by Heavens! on our present course the ship would run just right upon the point—and, to strike the clear water, her foreyard would require to be braced up, able or not, though the force of the tornado would come fearfully on her quarter, then. There was the chance of taking all the masts out of her ; but let them stand ten minutes, and the thing was done, when we opened into the lee of the points—otherwise all was over.

I sprang to the fore-braces and besought the men near me, for God's sake, to drag upon the lee one—and that as if their life hung upon it—when Westwood caught me by the arm. I merely shouted through my hands into his ear to go aft to Jacobs and tell him to keep her head a *single point* up, whatever might happen, to the last—then I pulled with the men at the brace till it was fast, and scrambled up again to the bowsprit heel. Jove! how she surged to it: the little canvas we had strained like to burst; the masts trembled, and the spars aloft bent like whip-shafts, everything below groaning again; while the swell and the blast together made you dizzy, as you watched the white eddies rising and boiling out of the dark—her cutwater shearing through it and the foam, as if you were going under it. The sound of the hurricane and the surf seemed to be growing together into one awful roar—my very brain began to turn with the pitch I was wrought up to—and it appeared next moment we should heave far up into the savage hubbub of breakers. I was wearying for the crash and the wild confusion that would follow—when all of a sudden, still catching the fierce rush of the gale athwart her quarter into the forecourse, which steadied her though she shuddered to it—all of a sudden, the dark mass of the land seemed as it were parting ahead of her, and a gleam of pale sky opened below the dusk into my very face. I no more knew what I was doing, by this time, nor where we were, than the spar before me—till again, the light broadened, glimmering low betwixt the high land and a lump of rising level on the other bow.

"I hurried aft past the confused knots of men holding on

to the lee of the bulwarks, and seized a spoke of the wheel. 'Tom,' shouted I to Westwood, 'run and let free the spanker on the poop! Down with the helm—down with it, Jacobs, my lad!' I sang out; 'never mind spars or canvas!' Down went the helm—the spanker helped to luff her to the strength of the gust—and away she went up to port, the heavy swells rolling her in, while the rush into her staysail and forecourse came in one terrible flash of roaring wind—tearing first one and then the other clear out of the bolt-ropes, though the loose spanker abaft was in less danger, and the way she had from both was enough to take her careening round the point into its lee. By Heavens! there were the streaks of soft haze low over the rising moon, under the broken clouds, beyond a far line of dim fringy woods, she herself just tipping the hollow behind, big and red—when right down from over the cloud above us came a spout of rain, then a sheet of it lifting to the blast as it howled across the point. 'Stand by to let go the larboard anchor!' I sang out through the trumpet; and Jacobs put the helm fully down at the moment, till she was coming head to wind, when I made forward to the mates and men. 'Let—go!' I shouted; not a look turned against me, and away thundered the cable through the hawse-hole; she shook to it, sheered astern, and brought up with her anchor fast. By that time the rain was plashing down in a perfect deluge—you couldn't see a yard from you—all was one white pour of it; although it soon began to drive again over the headland, as the tornado gathered new food out of it. Another anchor was let go, cable paid out, and the ship soon began to swing the other way to the tide, pitching all the while on the short swell.

"The gale still whistled her spars for two or three hours, during which it began by degrees to lull. About eleven o'clock it was clear moonlight to leeward, the air fresh and cool: a delicious watch it was, too. I was walking the poop by myself, two or three men lounging sleepily about the forecastle, and Rickett below on the quarter-deck, when I saw the chief officer himself rush up from below, staring wildly round him, as if he thought we were in some dream or other. I fancied at first the mate would have struck Rickett, from the way he went on, but I kept aft where I was. The eddies ran past the Indiaman's side, and you heard

the fast ebb of the tide rushing and rippling sweetly on her taut cables ahead, plashing about the bows and bends. We were in old Bob Martin's *river*, whatever that might be.

CHAPTER XV

"WELL," continued the commander, his voice making use of the breeze as he stood aft of the group, "I could not have slept more than three or four hours on a stretch, when I was woke by a fellow shoving his lantern in my face, and saying it wasn't me he wanted; for which I gave him a hearty objurgation, and turned over a swing of the cot to go asleep again. The sailor grumbled something about the parson being wanted for the captain; and all at once it flashed on my mind where we were, with the whole of last night's ticklish work—seeing that, hard rub as it was, it had clean left me for a time. 'Try the aftermost berth, then,' said I, slipping out in the dark to put on my trousers.

"The fact was, on going below to our state-room, I had found my own cot taken up by someone in the confusion; and as every door stood open at night in that latitude, I e'en made free with the nearest, which I knew was the missionary's. In a minute or two I heard Westwood meet the mate, who said he thought the captain would like to see him, and hoped they hadn't 'disturbed the other gentleman.' 'Oh no, I daresay not,' said Westwood, rather nervously, guessing, I daresay, what he was wanted for; while Finch slipped quietly past to listen at the state-room door, where both he and I might hear the 'other gentleman,' whoever he was, snoring pretty plain.

"When the first officer shut the door to, however, turned the key, and put it in his pocket, I nearly gave vent to a whistle. 'I see!' thought I; 'but, my fine fellow, it seemed you never were meant for a good jailer, anyhow!' He was no sooner gone than I walked forward toward the captain's cabin, near the after-hatchway, anxious enough to see how the poor man was, since I had had such a share in bringing him to a point, one way or another. Westwood was standing against the light out of the open door, and I looked in along with him, at the cot slung high to the beams like a lump of shadow, the

lamp striking across below it on all the captain's little affairs—his glazed hat and his wet coat, the names of two or three old books even hanging in shelves against the bulkhead—and into the little state-room off the cabin, where the surgeon was stooping to mix a draught.

"The hard-featured Scotch mate stood holding the captain's wrist with one clumsy flipper, as if trying to feel his pulse, fumbling about his own face with the other, and looking more concerned than I'd thought possible for him. 'Well, I've slept—a good deal,' said the captain, in a weak voice, putting up his hand slowly to rub his eyes, but seemingly quite composed, and knowing nothing of what had happened—which rid me of the horrid notion I could scarce help before, that he had known what he was about. His head was close shaved, and the look of a sailor clean gone off his face with the bluff, honest oak-colour it commonly had, till you'd have wished him decently in his bed thousands of miles off, with women slipping out and in; only the blood from his arm hanging down on the sheet, with the sharp point of his nose and the shape of his knees coming up off the shadow, kept it all in one with the wild affair on deck a few hours gone.

"'She's on her course, you say?' added he, listlessly. 'Must be a *very* light breeze though, Mr Macleod.' 'So it is, sir; so it is, no doubt!' replied the second mate, soothing him; 'did ye say we'll *pent* the ship, sir?' 'Ay, before we go into port, Mr Macleod, to be sure,' said Captain Williamson, trying to put a cheerful tone into his voice; 'she's had a good deal of buffeting, but we mustn't let 'em see it, you know! Didn't you lose a mizzen-topmast somehow, though, Mr Macleod?' 'Deed ay, sir,' said Macleod, hastily, afraid he was getting upon the scent of what had happened; 'the first officer's watch it was, sir—will *I* tell Mr Finch ye're wanting to speak to him about it, Captain Williamson?' and he began to shuffle towards the door.

"'Finch? Finch?' said the sick man, passing his finger over his eyes again; 'what voyage *is* this, Mr Macleod?' 'Why—why,' said the Scotchman, starting, and rather puzzled himself. 'Oo, it's just *this* voyage, ye know, sir! Mr Finch, ye mind, sir?' 'No, no; don't let him leave the deck for a moment, Macleod!' said the captain, anxiously: 'harkye, James, I'm afraid I've trusted over-much to the young man all

along! I'll tell ye, Mr Macleod, I don't know whether I was asleep or not, but I *heard* him somewhere wishing he had the command of this ship! I shouldn't like him to take her off my hands! Have you seen the Scilly lights yet, Mr Macleod?'

The mate shook his head; he had contrived to persuade the poor man we were far homeward bound. 'If you'd only get the pilot aboard, Mr Macleod,' the captain went on, 'I'd die contented; but mind the charts—mind the charts—I've got the charts to mind for another sort of voyage myself, James!' 'Hoot, hoot, captain!' said the Scotchman, 'what sets ye for to talk after that fashion—you'll be up an' about decks directly, sir! What were ye saying about top-m'sts now, sir?' Captain Williamson gave the second mate a glance that looked into him, and he held down his head, for the man evidently believed fully, as none of us could help doing, that there was death on the captain's face.

"James, James!" said the captain, slowly, 'you've no notion how some things weigh on the mind at a pass of this kind! Other things one don't remember—but there's one in particular, almost as it were yesterday—why, surely you were with me that voyage, Mr Macleod! when I let some o' the passengers take a boat in a calm, and all——' Here he stopped, seemingly overcome. 'There was one young creature amongst 'em,' he went on, 'the age of my own girl, Macleod—my own little Nan, you know—and now—now I miss *her*—and, and——' The poor man gave a great gulp, clutching the mate's arm, and gazing him in the face. 'Wasn't it a long time ago?' said he, very anxiously; 'if it wasn't, I would go mad! They were all drowned—drowned—I *see* that black squall coming down on the swell *now*, man, and the brig, and all of us looking out to the wind'ard!' 'I mind something about it,' replied Macleod, stoutly, though he looked away: 'twas none o' your fault, though, Captain Williamson—they were just *fey*, sir; and more than that, if ye mind, sir, they took the boat again' all orders—on the sly, I may say.'

"Westwood was on the point of starting forward to make known how the case stood, on the strength of our finding the paper in the bottle, when I pressed his arm, and whispered that it could only make things worse, and cheat the sick man of a notion more likely to do him good than otherwise. 'It's

a heavy charge, Mr Macleod, a heavy charge !' said he, falling back again ; ' and one Mr Brown needn't envy.' ' Mr *Finch*, sir, ye mind,' put in the second mate, setting him right ; ' but keep up your heart, sir, for any sake !' ' I feel I'll last over the time o' next full tide,' said the captain, solemnly. ' I don't want to know how far we're off, only if there's any chance at all, Macleod, you won't spare canvas to carry her in.'

"The Scotchman rubbed one of his hard cheek-bones after the other, and grumbled something or other in his throat by way of agreement. The whole thing was melancholy to see, after last night's stir, with the dim lamp or two twinkling along the gloom of the steerage, the dead quietness of the ship, and the smothered sort of glare under the captain's cot bringing out the mere litter on the floor, to the very cock-roaches putting their ugly feelers out of one of his shoes in a corner ; he shut his eyes, and lay for a minute or two seemingly asleep, only murmuring something about a breeze, and then asking them to shove out the port, 'twas so close. The second mate looked to the surgeon, who signed to him to do it, as if it didn't much matter by this time ; while he gave him the draught of physic he was mixing, however.

"The Indianman was beginning to swing slowly before the first of the flood, stern off at her anchors ; and whenever the port was opened, 'twas so still otherwise that you heard the tide clearly in the cabin, rippling along the timbers to the copper upon her bows—plash, plash, and lap, lip, lap, like no other earthly sound that a man can hear—and you even began to note it on something else a good bit off, though it seemed to be all quite dark out-board. The captain's eyes opened by degrees, till we saw them looking at us out of the shadow of the cot, and the second mate started as if to mend his mistake ; only 'twas plain enough, by that time, the captain *knew* the sound, half raising himself up and listening. A few early mosquitoes came in, and, after dancing about to refresh themselves in the light and warmth under the cot, began to bite savagely ; everyone of us had a distant horn sounding in his ear, and each was rubbing it or his nose, except the sick man ; but not one of them settled on him. As the starboard port slued gradually opposite to the nearest shore, a low, deep hum was carried in over the water, ebbing and flowing, and

full of dim, creeping noises, like things stirring in their sleep, as if the little cabin had been an ear to the ship. At times the tree-frogs broke out in a loud clicking chirrup; then, between the fits of it, when all seemed still again for a moment or two, you heard a low, half-smothered, small sound, deeper down, as it were, fill up the break with its throbbing and trill-trilling, as if just *one* land-cricket or a grasshopper did it, till it came out as clear as though it were a child's rattle close by, and all of a sudden stopped; when back floated the huge whispering hum again, with a damp smell of leaves on a cold breath of the land-air, that died away as quickly as it reached us. The bewilderment on Captain Williamson's white face for that minute's time was cruel to witness, and Macleod would certainly have closed the port, but for the captain's seizing his arm again, with a wild, questioning sort of a look into the second mate's eyes. 'Oh, good God!' faltered out the captain, 'it's—it's *land!*——where——where——?' 'For goodsake, sir,' said Macleod, 'don't ask me the now—take a bit of sleep, sir.'

"We could hear one another breathing, when ting-tang went four bells on deck. You heard it going across to the shore, as it were; and a few moments after, out of the humming far and wide along the land, back came the sound of another bell, toll upon toll, like some clock striking the hour a long way off. Then a third one followed on it, from a different direction, ringing clearer in the air; while the murmur and the rush seemed to swell up the more all round, and the plashing of the tide made the ship heave at her anchors. The mate shivered, Westwood and I started, but some extraordinary notion or other gleamed over the captain's face as he sat up. He was quite in his senses, too, apparently, though it seemed to be neither more nor less than sheer joy that overcame him, for he let out a long breath, and his eyes were glistening as if the tears stood in them. 'James—James Macleod!' said he quickly, with a husky voice, 'you oughn't to've deceived one you've sailed so long with; but you meant me a good surprise, and 'twas kindly done of you! I know the very run o' the clocks off Greenwich Reach, man; d'ye think one could mistake the sound of Lon'on town, fidgiting when it wakes, either?—we're—we're *home* already!'

"And he fell back in the cot, with the drops running down

his cheek, smiling happily all the time at Macleod in a way that went to one's heart; while the Scotchman stared helplessly to the surgeon, who slipped to the port and closed it. 'I know by your way, James,' continued the poor man, 'you wanted to send up to Virginia Row for 'em *all*; but don't send for an hour yet; better go up yourself and break it to 'em—*break* it to 'em, be sure of that, James; I shouldn't wonder but I pulled up, after all. Ah—that first one we heard was Greenwich Hospital—t' other is Dicksons' brewery or Redriff——' Here his eyelids began to drop, owing to the sleeping-draught he had got, when suddenly they opened wide again.

"'Ha!' said he, listening, and putting up a finger, 'but I haven't heard St Paul's strike six yet; it's seldom so long after; ought to be heard from here of a morning; let's——' By little and little, however, the sick man's eyes closed, and you heard him murmuring, as his finger sank down, 'Macleod, say—to her—say—luff, luff, my lad, keep her her course—' till his shrunk face was as quiet on the pillow as if he'd been really at home the first night after a voyage.

"'Oh man, doctor!' said the second mate, heaving a breath, 'isn't it terrible! Good forgive me for a lee to a dying man! Take an old seaman's word for it, Dr Small, yon clock ashore was no mortal soond, sir; ye may keep your drogues for them they'll do good to. 'Twas neither more or less than the captain's *dregy*!' 'Phoo!' answered the Scotch surgeon, who was one of your sceptical chaps, as I heard say, 'some other vessels here, of course, that's all.' The sailor gave him only a smile of pity for not being able to distinguish the sound of a ship's bell. 'There can't be a town hereabouts, Collins?' whispered Westwood. 'A town—no!' said I; 'it's the best wilderness sign you can have—the African bell-bird!'^{*} 'Ah, ah!' said the surgeon, laughing, 'there now, Macleod—of course it can be explained naturally, like other things.' The second mate gave me a doubtful scowl; but seeing Westwood, whom he had always seemed to think rather in the way before, his eye softened.

"'You'll be wanting to see the captain as soon as he wakes up, sir,' said he. 'I'm terrified to face him—but if ye'd just

^{*} *Sc.*—The South African and South American *campanero*, or bell-bird, whose peculiar note may be heard two or three miles off, chiefly in the loneliest parts of the Brazilian or Benguela forest.

slip in when he comes to himself, sir, I'm thinking, reverend sir, ye might wile him off yon terrible notion o' his.' Westwood shook his head, seriously, not knowing what to say. 'Ay, ay, sir,' continued Macleod, as he half closed the door, 'no doubt a man ought to be upon better things; but it's hard for him, when he's got a wife and weans six thousand miles away, and wants them alongside in a couple of hours—uncommon hard, sir! She's a douce, careful body, too, Mistress Williamson, like the captain's self; and I heard her fleech sore with the captain before we sailed, for to bide quietly ashore this time, for good. Poor woman! if she didn't e'en go the length o' pairtin' in anger the last morning, wae's me! till the very moment when (he telt me himself, sir), she out with her arms round his neck, crying like to choke! An' all to—but if the captain had a fault, 'twas the love o'—good forgive me, though, when it was but studying his fain'ly, Mr Thomas! If it was only an auld tarry deevil like me, now, with neither kith or kin!' 'Except cousins, Mr Macleod,' said the surgeon, as he wiped his lancet on his coat-tail—'plenty of them in the High——' But he caught Westwood's eye, and was ashamed to finish his heartless joke, though the rough second mate was too full of his feeling to hear it; when Westwood said something about our all thinking too little of these things beforehand, but how the captain was plainly a man that had done his duty carefully, which no doubt would ease his mind. The mate looked up, and eyed him sideways for a moment: 'Eh? what?' said he bluntly; 'it's not so little I mind o' what I used to hear at the kirk langsyne, as not to know that's not the right doctrine. D'ye think, sir, *that's* what'll put him over, when he finds out this is not Greenwich Reach? There's the Methody minister with the glasses, though!' he broke out, when again a look of despair came over his broad hard-favoured countenance. 'They're always upon works, too, I've heard!' said he, turning and murmuring to himself; 'oh, if I could but hoist out a bit screed o' the truth myself to comfort the poor fellow with! Lord, how didn't I think of the Shorter Carritch—let's see how't went—"What is the chief end of"—no, it's "What is faith in—faith in the only rule to direct us"—no, no—"Baptism is a sacrament—where—whereby"—and he was still overhauling some old catechism in this fashion, twisting himself all the time as if

he were twisting a stiff rope the wrong way, with a look of misery none of us could have had the heart to laugh at, when a middy's voice came squeaking down the dark after-hatchway: 'Mr Macleod, sir, the chief officer wants you on deck.'

"Westwood slipped quietly off, and the young surgeon was beginning to talk easily, to rid his mind of something, perhaps, till I asked if there wasn't any chance. 'Oh, the captain, you mean?' said he; 'don't think there is—he's a bad subject! If we were out at sea now, Mr Collins, the *calenture* would make him think the waves all grass, or something as green as—as the cawdets used to call——' I looked at the fellow sternly, and he changed his key, though with a surprised air.

"'You're blessed early up, though, you two!' said he. 'I suppose that cursed squall kept you idlers awake; but how they managed without the first mate I can't think. Clever fellow, Finch! but wasn't it a curious trick of the poor skipper to box him up below here? I fancy he'd a guess we would all soon be under the mate's command! It's a queer thing the brain, isn't it, Mr Collins? For example, now, there's the captain, it makes him think something or other a clock near London, with everything accordingly! Macleod fancies it a soopernatural knell, and twaddles about some Calvinist stuff he learned at school. Then you and me, you know, imaugines it's a bird—now, which is it after all? *Nothing*—maybe, eh?' The fellow capped all with a sneer, as much as to say I was a fool, which I had stood from him several times before; though now I could have kicked him, more for his heartless way than aught else. 'I tell you, Mr Small,' said I, 'what I think *you*—you're neither more nor less than a——' but I turned on my heel. 'I'm off, however,' said he, 'to turn in again.'

"Through the half-closed door one could see the sick man's face sleeping so quiet in the shadow from the lamp, you heard not a breath. I looked up the after-hatchway. It seemed still quite dark; and a patch of the deep dark-blue sky showed high over the square opening, with two or three keen sparks of stars, green ones and blue ones—you'd have thought the ladder, short as it was, went up to somewhere clean above the world. But the moment I got on deck, I saw it was really lighter—the heavy fog creeping slowly astern of the ship on both hands; the white mist rolling faster over it before the sea-breeze against her bows, which had swung seaward by this

time from the tide, that rushed like a mill-stream upon both her tight cables; while the muddy river-water, bubbling, eddying, and fronting away past, spread far up in the middle, into the dusk astern. *Such* a jabbering, croaking, hissing, shrieking, and yelling, too, as burst into one's ears out of the dark, as if whole legions of monkeys, bull-frogs, parrots, paroquets, and what not, were coming together full upon us from both sides, one band nearer than the other; till the heavy boom of the surf round the point, and the roar of the tide coming in over the shallows about the river-mouth, pretty well drowned it.

"The sudden change was a good relief, Babel though it seemed after the closeness below, with what had been going on; and I looked ahead towards the sea, which lay away out off our larboard bow, round the headland, and over the opposite point; a cold watery streak of light showing it from where the breakers rose plunging and scattering along the sandy bar, to the steady grey line of horizon, clipped by one of the two brown chops we had got into. It looked dreary enough as yet, the mouth of it being wider than I'd fancied it from seaward at night; though even with full water over the long spit of sand in the middle, there was no draught at all for the Indiaman except by the channel betwixt it and the bold point to our right; and pretty narrow it appeared from our present berth, heaving, as it did, with the green swell that set in, while meantime the mist scudding across the face of the headland let us see but the hard lump of bare black rock underneath.

"In less time than I've taken to speak, however, the full space of sky aloft was turning clear, the sea far away suddenly shone out blue, with the surges tipped white; you saw a sparkling star high over it sink slowly in, and the fog spread off the water near us, till here and there you caught the muffled-up shape of a big tree or two looming through, not half-a-mile off our starboard quarter; the mist creeping over the headland till the sharp peak of it stood out against its shadow on the shoulder of a hill beyond, and old Bob Martin's single clump of cocoas on the rise waving in landward from the brisk sea-breeze.

"One passenger after another came peeping sleepily out of the companion-hatch at the men clearing away the wreck of the spars, and swabbing the quarter-deck down; but scarce

had Smith, one of the young writers, reached the poop, when he gave a shout that covered both poop-ladders in no time, with people scrambling over each other to get up. Next minute you'd have fancied them a knot of flamingoes with their wings out, as the bright red daybreak brought out the edge of the woods far astern, through a hazy lane in the purple mist, topped so with stray cocoa-nut trees and cabbage-palms, dabbled like brushes in the colour, that they scarce knew them to be woods at all, and not a whole lot of wild savages fresh from other business of the kind, coming down with all sorts of queer tools upon us; more especially when one heard such a chorus of unaccountable cries, whistling and screaming, as seemed to struggle with the sound of the sea ahead of us, and the plash alongside.

"The huge round sun struck hot crimson along the far turn of the reach, with all manner of twisted blots upon him, as it were, and the very grass and long reeds seemingly rustling into his face, so one didn't for the moment know *him* either; while the muddy chocolate-coloured eddies, sweeping and closing beyond the ship's rudder, glittered and frothed up like blood; and every here and there, along the streak of light, the head of a log or a long branch came dipping up terribly plain—no wonder the old *Seringapatam* had apparently turned tail to it all, ready to bolt if she could.

"Almost as soon as you took your hands off your eyes, though, and could see without a red ball or two before them—*there* was the nearest shore growing out toward our starboard bulwark all along, crowded with wet green woods, up into steaming high ground—all to eastward a dazzle of light, with two or three faint mountain-peaks shooting up far off in it, and a woody blue hill or so between; while here and there a broad bright hazy spoke of the sun's great wheel came cutting down into the forest, that brought out a patch full of long big leaves, ten times greener than the rest, and let you look off the deck into the heart of it amongst the stems over the bank. The jabber in the woods had passed off all at once with the dusk, the water deepening over the bar, and the tide running slower, so that everyone's confused face turned breathless with delight as it grew stiller and stiller.

"The whole breadth of the river shone out by this time, full and smooth, to the opposite shore three times as far away,

where the wood and bulrushes seemed to grow out of the water; a long thick range of low muddy-looking mangroves, with a cover of dark green, rounding from the farthest point one saw, down to some sandy hummocks near the mouth, and a ridge of the same drifted up by the wind off the beach. Beyond that side there was nothing, apparently, but a rolling sweep of long coarse grass, with a few straggling cocoa-nut trees and baobabs, like big swollen logs on end, and taken to sprouting at top: a dun-coloured heave of land in the distance, too, that came out, as it got hotter, in a long desert-like, red-brick-dust sort of a glare. The sole living things to be seen as yet were some small birds rising up out of the long grass, and the turkey-buzzards sailing high over all across, as if on the look-out.

"The air was so cool and clear, however, from the tornado overnight—not a cloud in the sky, and the strange scent of the land reaching us as the dew rose off it—you could see far and wide, with a delicious feeling of it all, that kept everyone standing fixed on the spot where he first gained the deck, even the men looking over their shoulders with the ropes in their fists, and the fresh morning breeze lifting one's hair. Surprised as the passengers were, nobody spoke a word, except the three or four children shouting, dancing, and pointing together, without being noticed, till, all at once, the whole poopful burst into one confusion of questions and exclamations, running hither and thither, shaking hands and jostling each other like distracted people.

"I had a spyglass at my eye, making out the other shore, when, turning round in the middle of it, the first thing I saw was Violet Hyde's face, as she stood with one little foot on the stair-head behind me, holding the rail with one hand, her eyes sparkling, and her parted lips murmuring like one in a dream: 'Oh, Mr Collins!' exclaimed she, breathless; 'what is this? Where are we—is it Fairyland? A river!' 'Yes, in Africa,' I said; 'but whether it's the Bembarooghe or the ——' 'That fearful, fearful evening!' continued she, shuddering: 'I saw the frightful sky, and heard the storm—and now!—*Were* we not in some very great danger, sir?' 'Yes, ma'am, we were,' replied I, as stiffly as I could; 'but, happily, it's over now!' And I gave my cap a lift to move off, uneasy as I was, every moment, lest Sir Charles should catch me speak-

ing again to his daughter. However, Miss Hyde was gazing eagerly at the land, and I had to wait. 'What lovely, lovely green!' she half whispered: 'oh, if one could only tread upon it!—so un-English those strange tall trees look! are they not cocoa-nut trees and—and——' Suddenly, her voice faltered, and she turned round with her bright blue eyes swimming in tears—'How—how thankful we should be that we are not—like our poor, poor friends, who were lost!' exclaimed she. I thought of the poor captain below in his cot, but next moment I was explaining, to her sheer amazement, how the real truth of the matter stood, though, if possible, it seemed to horrify her still more. 'I can't think what they may be,' I rapped out; 'but if I had the command of this ship, I'd up anchor this very hour, and go out—at least as soon as the tide ebbed; but, at any rate, at the Cape I mean to get hold of some schooner or other, and if it were to China, why, I'll cruise after 'em till I——' 'Then you think,' began she, and an arch inquisitive sort of look danced in both her eyes as she turned away to watch the shore again, saying slowly, 'You *are* a—*a* naval gentleman then, Mr West—Mr Collins?' I tried to stammer out something by way of an explanation, but it wouldn't do, and I said, 'At any rate, I'm no better, by this time, than an idler aboard *here*, ma'am!'

"All at once, I caught a side-look from her eyes, that wasn't meant for me, as she glanced over the poop-netting. Half provoking and half sweet it was, though, and it made my brain somehow or other seem to spin round, till a little after, before I well knew what I was about, I was holding the long spyglass for her to see the bank of the river—her warm breath coming on my ear as I stooped before her, near enough to have kissed the muslin on her shoulder, while her rosy mouth changed with every new spot that the glass brought near; and she had to hold one taper forefinger on the other eyelid to keep it shut, so that I could dwell on her face as if she'd been asleep. 'There, there!' exclaimed she, 'are actually flowers—with such immense leaves! And now—an enormous tree, with roots hanging from the branches, and other stems growing up into them. Why, yes!—is not that a banyan-tree, Mr——?' and she looked away at *me*, when of course the tree was vanished, and instead of that, the rather undeniable expression of a fellow in love, two or three inches off, bent

fair upon her. Violet Hyde coloured a little, and looked in again. 'And, I think,' continued she, 'I see—oh, two such beautiful creatures—deer, I think, coming out to drink from the river!' All this time, the ecstasies of the rest kept up the noise and confusion; the young lady's-maid was gaping open-mouthed at the shore, not even noticing her young mistress's straw bonnet fall off, and I had just picked it up with one hand, to put it quietly over that matchless nut-brown hair of hers, shining suddenly in the sun, like silk, when the judge's voice rang out sharp from the other stair, 'Violet, child, you'll have a sunstroke. Kitmagar, you scoundrel, *beebee sahib punkah lao*, sirrah!' I held on to the telescope like grim death, while that eternal *punkah* was hoisted over us both, the judge eyeing me somewhat coolly for the first moment. 'Well, well, Mr Westwood,' said he, however, 'you've got rid of that proud freak of yours; such behaviour as yours yesterday, I assure you, I shouldn't have endured from anyone else, young man! But, my dear boy,' added he, suddenly, 'from what I can gather, indeed, saw myself last night, I am convinced we owe you a very great deal—even, I suspect, the safety of the entire vessel!' Miss Hyde had left off using the glass, and, as I stood up, she gave me a quick glance of amazement. 'Mere chance, sir,' I stammered. 'Why,' said Sir Charles, 'I saw you at the steerage in the middle of the hurricane, when I believe the actual officers of the ship had left it in dismay. I tell you what, Mr Westwood, you're a bold fellow; and your uncle and I must see in India if we can't reward you in some way, my dear boy!' All this fondling style of thing, and for little more than a piece of luck, would have disgusted me if I hadn't been more taken up with watching the side of Violet Hyde's face, as she listened for sounds in the woods ashore. 'Strange, wasn't it, Violet, my dear,' continued he to his daughter, 'that my friend the Councillor's nephew should have gone out in the same Indiaman, so fortunately—though, of course, after all, it *was* the first this season.' 'Ah!' said she, starting, 'I beg pardon, papa—what did you—weren't you talking of the river?' 'Don't you hear, child,' said the judge, 'I said it was a curious coincidence, Mr Westwood's going in this vessel.' 'Oh yes, indeed!' answered she, and couldn't help looking down a little confounded. But the lady's-maid was

putting on her tiny slipper, which had come off, while her father mentioned that of course I'd had practical reasons for not owning my profession hitherto; meaning, I suppose, that I didn't speak for fear of having to work, like the monkeys—though the sharp old lawyer must have had a better guess by this time, and queer enough it must have been to see her face, listening to him as he explained it all. I stood biting my lips, meanwhile—two or three times on the point of telling him it was all nonsense about my being a nephew of any hanged old nabob whatever; when Sir Charles said carelessly he should leave the *Seringapatam*, if possible, at the Cape of Good Hope, as he couldn't trust safely to the present officers.

“Just then up got the merry chant of the men running round with the capstan-bars, to get up anchor; the chief officer wishing, as it was found, to carry her farther into the river with the breeze—for the sake of filling our water-casks the easier, according to him, but more likely out of sheer spite at what had been done without him. What with eagerness in the cuddy to get on shore and see the woods, the breakfast below was a rare scene, no one minding what he did, even to rushing slap into a couple of ladies' berths for his boots, or laying a couple of loaded Joe Mantons into somebody's bed, swallowing biscuit and butter on the way.

“Suddenly, we heard the splash of paddles in the water, with a hail in some foreign tongue or other, and hurried on deck in a body; where we found the ship tiding it slowly up, under jibs and foretopsail, and beginning to open a longer reach where the river seemed to narrow in. A black-eyed, black-bearded fellow, with a tallow, yellow, sweaty sort of complexion, in a dirty jacket, drawers, and short boots, and an immense grass hat, shouting Portuguese louder and louder into the first mate's ear, till he actually put both hands together, and roared through them, pointing to himself now and then, as if surprised he wasn't known.

“All at once, evidently quite disgusted, he turned and looked over the side, saying something to one of the ugliest and most ill-looking mulattoes I ever saw, who sat in the stern of a long rough canoe, hollowed out of some tree, with two naked black rowers, less of the real nigger than himself, as they leant grinning up at the bulwarks with their sharp teeth,

that appeared as if they'd been filed to a point. The mulatto gloomed, but he gave no answer, and as one of the cadets and I knew a little Portuguese, we managed together to get something out of the fellow on deck, though, at noticing him for the first time that morning, I saw Finch turn red with surprise.

"We understood the man to ask if we wanted nothing particular in the river, the meaning of which I saw better on bethinking me of the fire along the bush inside the headland, that had let me see the marks of it—no doubt a signal to some craft they had taken us for. However, so soon as he heard we needed no more than water and spars, after musing a minute, and speaking again to Rodriguez, as he called the mulatto, he said he would pilot us to a convenient berth himself, for two or three dollars; notwithstanding his title was, as he said, Don José Jeronimo Santa somebody, commandant of the Portuguese fort something else. The river, we found, was the Nouries or the Cuanené, where they had a settlement called Caconda, a good way up; a remarkably bad country he gave us to know, and not worth staying in, from the number of flies, and the elephants having got into a cursed way of burying their tusks—except, he hinted, for the plenty of blacks, all anxious to be sold and to see foreign countries; but the trade was nothing yet—absolutely nothing, said he, blowing his nose without a pocket-handkerchief, and suiting the act to the word, as he mentioned his notion of throwing it up and going farther north-west.

"By this time we had stood over to the lowest shore, till you could see the thick coffee-coloured mud in among the roots and suckers of the dark-green mangroves, with their red pods bursting under their rank-looking leaves—and over them, through the tall coarse guinea-grass, to the knots of feathery cocoas behind, swarming with insects; when he gave the sign to go about, one of his blacks heaving a lead, and grunting out the depth of water, as the ship made a long stretch across towards the woody side again, and Don José all the time taking it as easy as if the quarter-deck were his own, while he asked for a cigar and lighted it. Joke though he did, yet I couldn't like the fellow at all; however, as soon as she got pretty near the shore, about a quarter of a mile from what seemed a wide creek, glittering up between a high fringe of cane and bamboo clumps, he had the sails clued up, a single anchor let go in

four or five fathoms, and our Portuguese friend got his money and bundled over the side, pulling quietly ashore.

CHAPTER XVI

“THE tide by this time was quite still, and the breeze sank almost at once, as we were shut in from the sea, when we were surprised to see the striped Portuguese flag, rise off a tall bamboo stick, among the bushes on the open shore, nearly abreast of us, where a low muddy-like wall was to be made out, with something of a thatched roof or two, and a sort of rude wooden jetty running before it into the water. Shortly after, Don José came paddling out again, and got on board, this time with an old cocked hat on, excusing himself for not having fired a gun—which was to save us expense, he remarked, being particular friends—seeing that he’d got to demand twelve dollars of harbour dues and duties, whereas, if he saluted, he must have charged fourteen. The cool impudence of this brought the chief officer from the capstan; but the steady face of the fellow, and the glance he took round the deck when the cadet told him he’d better be off at once, made me think he had something or other to back him. Mr Finch, as usual, fumed up into a passion, and told the men to fling him over into his canoe, which they accordingly did, without the least nicety about it; the Portuguese next minute picking himself up, and standing straight, with the look of a perfect devil, as he shook his fist at the whole ship, while the canoe slid off to the shore.

“Budge even so much as a single fathom, at present, we could not; and most of us were too much in the spirit of fun and venture to care a fig for having made an enemy of Don José So-on, as the cadet called him; indeed, it seemed rather to set a finer point on people’s admiration of the green jungly-looking shore next to us, with its big aloes and agaves growing before the bush, and all sorts of cocoas, palms, monkey-bread, and tall white-flaked cotton trees, rising in every way out from over the rest. For my part, I thought more of the Portuguese *interest*, after all, than his hatred—which proved correct, by his soon sending out a sulky

message by the mulatto, offering to sell us fowls and a bullock, at no ordinary price. However, all hands from the cabin were mad already to get ashore somewhere, and the cadets, bristling with fowling-pieces and rifles, each singing out that he was ready to supply the whole ship with fresh meat; so the mulatto had to sheer off, with a boat nearly lowered over his head.

"From where we lay at the time, what with the large creek off one bow, and the broad river ahead of us, spreading brimful along to the light, the water had the look of a huge lake, fringed in by a confused hazy bluish outline steeping in the heat, where the distance clipped behind the lumps of keen verdure, showering over a dark mangrove-covered point. Before the two large quarter-boats could be got ready for the ladies and the rest of us, in fact, we heard the gigful of writers and cadets beginning to pop away at everything they saw alive, out of sight of the ship, till at last we were afloat, too, pulling slowly into the middle of the stream, and the men eyeing us lazily as they turned-to about the rigging, to send up new spars in place of those lost. The old Indiaman's big bows stood looming up broad astern of us on the sluggish eddies round her cable, with her tall, steady forespars and furled yards rising white against the low line of marshy shore in the distance, and wavering in her shadow below, till the thick green branches of the next point shut her out, and the glare off the face of the creek shot level over all of us in the two cutters, wild with every kind of feeling that India passengers could have after two months' voyage.

"For my own part, I should have had rather a suspicion how absurd it was to go a-pleasuring in an African river we knew nothing about, especially when I saw that a day or two so long after the rains might suck it up, during ebb, into a pretty narrow mid-channel; all I thought of was, however, that I was steering the boat with Violet Hyde in it, the kit-magar holding his gaudy punkah over her before me, while the judge, with his gun in his hands, was looking out as eagerly, for the time, as the four griffins were pulling furiously, in spite of the heat that madé the sweat run into their eyes.

"The other party were soon off ahead of us up the main river, under care of the Scotch surgeon, laughing, talking, and

halloing in chase of the cadets who had first left. However, Sir Charles thought there was more likelihood of game along the creek, and the ladies fancied it something new, so I steered right into it; the fat midshipman, Simm, watching me critically as I handled the yokelines, which he had given up to me in a patronising way, and the sailor in the bow regarding the exertions of the griffins with a knowingly serious expression, while he dabbled his flipper at ease in the water.

"As the tide steadied, this said creek proved to be a smaller river, apparently from the hilly country I had noticed beyond the woods, by the clearness of its current, that showed the pale yellow reflection of the close bamboo-brake on one side, deep down into the light—the huge, sharp, green notched aloe-leaves and fern showing here and there out of it—the close, rank, stifling smell of rotten weeds and fungi giving place to the strange wild scent of the flowers, trailing and twisting in thick snaky coils up the stems on our opposite hand, and across from branch to branch, with showers of crimson and pink blossoms and white stars; still, eager as the ladies were to put foot on land, 'twas no use looking as yet for a spot of room, let alone going farther in.

"The cadets were not long in being blown, either; when the midshipman, the bowman, and I, had to relieve them. However, *then* I could look straight toward Violet Hyde's face, the shade of the scarlet punkah hanging over it, and her soft little straight nose and forehead catching a flickering burst from the leaves as we sheered at times under cover of the bank; while her eyelids, drooping from the glare, gave her bright eyes a half-sleepy sort of violet look, and it was only her lips that let you see how excited she felt. The griffin who had the tiller steering with the judgment of a tailor's 'prentice on a picnic to Twickenham, we came two or three times crash into the twigs of some half-sunk tree; then a blue bird like a heron would rise direct ahead of us, with its tall wet spindle legs and spurs glistening like steel behind it into the light, and a young snake in its sharp bill; or a grey crane rustled out of the cane from overhead, its long wings creaking in the air out of sight. Suddenly, you heard a long chirruping croak from a tree-frog, and the ground ones gave full chorus from farther in, whining and cackling and peep-

peep-peeping in one complete rush that died as suddenly away again, like thousands of young turkeys. Then out in the midst of the quiet would come a loud clear wheetle-wheetling note from some curious fowl in an opening, with another of the same to match, dimmer amongst the thick of the bush. However, everything of the kind seemed to sink down with the heat at noon, the very buzz of flies round every dark feather of the cocoas, and the mosquito-hum along the bank, getting fainter; till one *heard* the heat, as it were, creeping and thrilling down through the woods, with the green light that steeped into both edges of the long creek; every reed, cane, leaf, and twig, seemingly, at last giving it back again with a whispering, hushing crackle, and the broad fans of the palms tingling in it with rays from them, as they trembled before you in the glare, back into the high bundles of knotted and jointed bamboo, with their spiky-tufted crowns.

“‘Can you not almost *feel* the forest grow!’ exclaimed Miss Hyde; while the boat floated quietly to one side, and her charming young face shining out from the punkah, before Master Gopaul’s deucedly ugly one, coolly staring past his snub nose, made one think of a white English rose and a black puff-ball growing together under a toadstool; plenty of which, as red as soldiers’ coats, and as big as targets, looked here and there out of the bank. It put new spirit into me to see her, but still we could do little more than shove across from one side to the other—till something all at once roused us up in the shape of a long scaly-like log, seemingly lying along in the sun, which tumbled off the edge with a loud splash, and two of the young fellows let drive from their fowling-pieces, just after the alligator had sunk to the bottom. Rather uncomfortable it was to come sheering right over him next moment, and catch a glimpse of his round red eyes and his yellow throat, as the mud and weeds rose over him.

“The other ladies shrieked, but Violet Hyde only caught hold of her father’s arm and started back; though her blue eye and the clear cut of her pretty nostril opened out, too, for the moment her lips closed. Five minutes after, when a couple of large guinea-fowl sprang up, Sir Charles proved himself a better shot than the cadets, by dropping one of them over the water ahead of us, which was laid hold of by the reefer of the Indiaman, and stowed away fluttering into

the stern-locker — Simm observing coolly that it was a scavengering carrion sort of bird, but perhaps one of his messmates might like to take it home stuffed to his sister. The judge merely smiled and patted the mid on the shoulder, remarking in great good-humour that he, Simm, would make a good attorney; and on we held, soaking to our shirts and panting, until the bowman hooked down the stem of a young plantain, with a huge bunch of full ripe yellow bananas under the long flapping leaves at its head, right into the midst of us, out of a whole clump of them, where the smooth face of the cove showed you their scarlet clusters of flowers and green round pods hanging over it, hidden as they were from above. Every man of us made a clutch, and the stem almost lifted Simm out of the boat with it, as it sprang back into the brake, rousing out a shower of gaudy-coloured butterflies, and a cloud of mosquitoes, and making the parroquets scream inside; while the cadets' mouths were so full they couldn't speak, the reefer making a gulp with the juice seeming to come out at his eyes, the sailor spitting out his quid and stuffing in a banana, and the ladies hoping they were safe to eat, as I peeled the soft yellow rind off, and handed one to Violet Hyde, which she tasted at once. But if ever one enters into the heart of things in the tropics, I'd say 'tis when that same delicious taste melts through and through and all over you, after chewing salt-junk for a space. I remember one foremast man, who was always so drunk ashore he used to remember nothing in India but '*scoffing** one juicy benanny,' as he called it; 'but hows'ever, Jack,' he'd say, 'twas blessed good, ye know, and I'm on the look-out for a berth again, jist for to go and have another.' One of us looked to the other, and Miss Hyde laughed and coloured a bit when I offered her a second, while her father said, full five minutes after, 'Gad, Violet, it almost made me think I saw Garden Reach in the Hooghly, and the Baboo's Ghaut!'

"This whole time we couldn't have got more than three-quarters of a mile from where the ship lay, when, all at once, the close growth on our left hand began to break into low bush, and at length a spot offered where we might get ashore tolerably, with two or three big red ant-hills heaped up out of the close prickly-pear plant, and the black ants streaming

* *Anglice*, eating.

over the bank, as well as up the trunk of a large tree. The monkeys were keeping up a chattering stir everywhere about ; and two or three bright green little lizards, changing into purple and back again, as they lay gleaming in the sun on the sides of the ant-heaps, darted their long tongues out like silver bodkins at the ants coming past. In we shoved with a cheer, and had scarce moored to the tree ere the ladies were being handed out and tripping over the ground-leaves to the ankles, starting on again at every rustle and prick, for fear of snakes ; till the bowman in charge was left in the boat by himself, and, there being seven of us with guns over our arms, the next notion of the griffins was to get a sight of some 'natives.'

"In fact, there was a sort of a half-track leading off near the bank, through among the long coarse grass and the ferny sprouts of young cocoas, and a wide stretch of open country seen beyond it, dotted all over with low clumps of trees and bush rounded off in the gush of light, that gave it all a straw-coloured tint up to where a bare reddish-looking ridge of hill looked over a long swell of wild forest, off a hot, pale, cloudless sky. Here and there you saw the shadow of one bluff lying purple on the side of another, and a faint blue peak between, letting north'ard into some pass through the hills, but no signs of life save a few dun big-headed buffaloes feeding about a swampy spot not very far off, and rather too shaggy, by all appearance, to make pleasant company. Accordingly, we held for a few yards under the shade, where the fat mid, thinking to show off his knowingness by getting cocoa-nuts for the ladies, began to shy balls of mud from the creek-sides at the monkeys in the trees.

"However, he brought us rather more than he bargained for, till the whole blessed jungle seemed to be gathering between us and the boat to pelt us to death with nuts as big as eighteen-pound shot, husks and all ; so off we had to hurry into the glare again, Sir Charles half-carrying his daughter through guinea-grass up to the waist—when somebody felt the smell of smoke, and next minute we broke out near it, wreathing up white from inside a high bamboo fence, propped up and tied all along with cocoa-nut husk. 'What the devil !' shouted the foremost cadet, as soon as he found the opening, 'they're cannibals!—roasting a black child, by heaven !' and

in he dashed, being no chicken of a fellow *ashore* at any rate, the others after him, while the judge, Simm, and I kept outside with the ladies, who were all of a shudder of course, what with the thought, and what with the queer scent of roast meat that came to us. 'Ha, ha!' laughed the cadet next moment, 'it's only a monkey, after all!—come in, though, Sir Charles, if you please, sir—nobody here, ladies.'

"There, accordingly, was the little skinned object twirling slowly between two bamboo sticks, over a fire beneath two or three immense green leaves on a frame, with its knees up not to let its legs burn; about a dozen half-open sheds and huts, like little corn-stacks, thatched close with reeds, and hung with wattled mats of split bamboo, giving the place more the look of a farmyard than a village; as there was a big tree spreading in the middle, a few plantains, yams, and long maize-stalks flowering out of the coarse guinea-grass which the niggers hadn't taken the trouble to tread down all round inside of the fence.

"However, we weren't long of perceiving an old grey-headed black sitting on his hams against the post of a hut, watching us all the time; and a villainously ugly old thief he looked, with a string of Aggry beads about his head, and a greegree charm-bag hung round his shrivelled neck, which was stuck through a hole in some striped piece of stuff that fell over to his knees, as he sat mumbling and croaking to himself, and leering out of the yellows of his eyes, though too helpless to stir. Something out of the way attracted my notice, glittering in front of the hut over his head; but, on stepping up to it, I wasn't a little surprised to find it the stern-board of some small vessel or other, with the tarnished gilt ornament all round, and the name in large white letters—'*Martha Cobb*'—the port, Boston, still to be made out, smaller, below. This I didn't think so much of in itself, as the craft might have been lost; till, on noticing that the old fellow's robe was neither more nor less than a torn American ensign, in spite of his growls and croaks I walked past him into the hut, where there was a whole lot of marling-spikes, keys, and such like odds and ends, carefully stored up in a bag, marked with the same name, besides a stewpan with some ostrich feathers stuck where the handle had been, as if this rascally black sinner wore it on his head on state

occasions, being probably the head man and a justice of the peace.

“What struck me most, though, was a pocket-book with a letter inside it, in a woman’s hand, addressed to the master of the brig *Martha Cobb*; dated a dozen years before, yellow and fusty, and with tarry finger-marks on it, as if the poor skipper, God knows, had read it over and over in his cabin many a fresh breeze betwixt there and Boston. I put it in my pocket, with a curse to the old black devil, as he croaked out and fell on his face trying to bite me with his filed teeth when I passed out, to follow the rest out of the bamboo-pen; wondering, of course, where all the other negroes could be, unless they were dodging about the river shore to watch the Indianaman—little chance as there was of their trying the same joke with the *Seringapatam* as with the *Martha Cobb*.

“As for the women, however, I had scarce joined our party going out, when we met a half-naked black hag with a bunch of cocoa-nuts and husk. The moment she saw us she gave a squeal like an old hen, and fell flat, while several younger ones, jogging along with their naked black piccaninnies on their backs, turned tail and were off with a scream. Next minute we were almost as startled as they could be when three plump young jetty damsels dropped down right into the bushes alongside of us, off as many tall cocoas which they’d been climbing by a band round them, for the nuts. ‘Mercy on us!’ said the eldest of our lady passengers; and it *was* rather queer, since they had nothing earthly upon them save very very short pet—I beg your pardon, ma’am, but I didn’t know any other word. However, off they scampered for the woods, Simm and one of the cadets hard after them, and we turning away to smother our laughter, especially as the griffin had forgot his mother being with us. The middy being first started, he was a good way ahead, when all at once the sternmost of the black girls tripped in the band she had over her shoulder, Simm giving a cheer as he made prize of his chase; but scarce before the whole three of the dark beauties had him smothered up amongst them, laughing yelling, and squalling as they hauled him about; till I saw the dirk Simm sported glitter in one of their hands, and I made towards the spot in the notion of their finishing him in right earnest.

"The black damsels ran off together as the unlucky reefer picked himself up, coming to us with his hair rubbed up like a brush, his cap out of shape in his hand, and the gold band off it, his red face shining, and all the gilt anchor-buttons off his jacket, besides being minus his dirk. 'Simm, Simm, my fine fellow!' said his friend the cadet, like to die with laughing, 'what—what did they do to you?—why, your head looks like a chimney-sweep's mop!' Simm knocked his cap against a tree to set it right, without a word, and we followed the others to the boat, where he swore, however, that he'd kissed 'em all three, at which Mrs Atkins fairly took him a slap on the side of the head, saying he was a nasty, improper boy, and she was glad *his* poor mother couldn't see him run after creatures of that kind in African woods. 'Natives, indeed!' said she, 'I have heard so often of native modesty, too, in books; but, after all, there's nothing like experience, I think, Sir Charles?' 'Certainly not, ma'am,' replied the judge, humouring her, as she hadn't often had the chance of speaking to him before; 'tis almost as bad in India, though, you know.' 'Oh, *there*, Sir Charles,' said the lady, 'I never happened to go out, of course, except in the carriage!' 'Ah,' said the judge, coolly, 'you should try an elephant, sometimes, ma'am.'

"After this, as Sir Charles was bent on getting a shot at something better, with a glass or two of Madeira to refresh us, we pulled farther still up the small river, passing the mouth of a deep marshy inlet, where I noticed a few long canoes belonging to the Congo village we had seen; the close, heavy heat of the woods getting, if possible, worse; and the rank green growth topping up round us as flat as before; when the sound of a loud rush of water up-stream broke upon us through the bush to northward, the surface rippling, and a slight cool breath seeming to flutter across it now and then, the very noise putting fresh soul into you. Suddenly we opened out on a broad bend, where it was hard work to force her round, and next moment a low fall was gleaming before us, where a hill-stream came washing and plashing over one wide rocky step above another in the turn, then sweeping out of a deep pool to both hands, and running away ahead, in between the spread of trees, seemingly to a sort of a lagoon, where you saw the light in the middle glancing bright down upon its face. A

broad blue burst of air and light struck down along the hollow the stream rushed out of, off the roots of a regular mountain, leaning back to the sky, with its big tufted knolls and its shady rifts thrown out blue beyond one or two thick scaly-stemmed date-trees, waving their long, feathery, fringe-like leaves to the least bit of a breeze, on as many rough points near at hand; the *whole* shape of the mountain you couldn't see for the huge mahogany-trees, teak, and African oak, rising up over one shoulder into a lump of green forest. In five minutes more we were through into the lagoon, which very possibly took round into the main river again, only the opposite end, to our surprise, was all afloat with logs of big timber choking it up, so that there we must stick or go back upon our wake.

"However, the lagoon itself being broad enough and round enough in all conscience, with a deep hollow opening up out of it on the high ground, the judge and the cadets thought a better place couldn't have been chosen for landing after a little sport, while we left the fair ladies to rest in the cool, and look at the lotus-lilies spread all over one cove of it, floating white on their large leaves. The green edge of scum ran about the black shadow on the rest of it, gathering round where a big branch or two had fallen in, with the hot white sky looking bluer out through the broad leaves coming together aloft, and the showers of little sharp ones in the tamarind twigs, mangoes, ironwood, sumach, and all sorts, while here and there a knot of crimson blossoms looked out from under the boughs in the dark, humming with small flies. Beautiful spot as it was every way, especially after the heat, yet I didn't much like the idea of letting the ladies stay by themselves, except the sailor and the kitmagar. Nothing particular had turned up to trouble us, certainly, but I dare-say 'twas because there was *one* of them I never looked at without her soft fairy-like air making me think of something that might happen to her, life-like though she seemed. When I saw a big branch over her head, I kept fancying what it would do if it fell—and now, the thumping slabs and stones we scrambled over up into the gully toward the mountain, seemed to have come tumbling down off it to the very water's edge, covered with nets of thick creeping plants and trails of flat, fingery-leaved flowers, such as

you see in hot-houses at home. A few yards higher, too, where the ground broke away into a slanting hollow out of the bush, 'twas all trampled and crushed, half-withering together in the heat of the sun, the young trees twisted and broken, and two or three good-sized ones lying out from the roots, which I set to the score of the timbers rolling down their logs, for some craft that evidently got their cargoes hereaway.

"After all, the thought of a slap at some wild game was tempting enough, the judge appearing to consider anyone but a sportsman nobody at all; so up we went behind him out of the gully till we were all blowing like so many porpoises on the head of it, Sir Charles raising his finger as we peeped across a grassy slope right under us, where a whole drove of small slender-legged antelopes were feeding. We had just time to rest, getting a breath of air off the heights, when one of the foremost lifted its head, listening the opposite way from us; next moment the entire scatter of them came sweeping direct over to leeward in a string—we could almost catch their bright black eyes through the grass, when the crack of our seven barrels turned them bolt off at a corner, and they were gone like wind on water. All of us had missed save Sir Charles Hyde, but his rifle-bullet had sent one of the antelopes springing up in the air ten feet or so, rolling over and over into the grass again, where we found it lying with its tongue out, and its large eye glazing amidst the blades and dust—a pair of huge turkey buzzards falling, as it were, out of two specks in the sun above us, already, and rising with an ugly flap while we got round the dead creature.

"'Hallo!' said the mid suddenly, looking back over toward the hollow we'd come out of, 'what's that?'

"From where we stood we could just see through the wild cane to the mouth of the gully, half-a-mile down or more, leading upon the trees by the lagoon. I thought I could hear a dull heavy sound now and then going thump thump down the hollow and along it, the stones rumbling from one spot to another at the root of the hill; but noticing a light smoke rising farther into the course of the creek, with a faint echo of axes at work somewhere in the woods below, I wasn't sorry to find the timberers were still in the river, showing we weren't the only civilised folks that thought it fit to visit. Perhaps

it might have been a quarter of an hour or more, however, and we were all looking out sharp for birds of any kind to pop at, happening to turn my head, I saw the long reeds were moving about the banks below and the trees twisting about furiously, and no sooner had I made a few paces than good heavens!—right in the break of the trees at the landing-place—*there* was a huge brute of some sort coming slowly up out of the water; then another, and another, glistening wet in the bright light as the shadow of the branches slipped behind them. A blindness came over my eyes, and I had scarce time to make out the big block-like heads and moving trunks of five or six black African elephants, ere the whole case flashed upon me, and away I dashed full-speed down the slope. The big beasts were turning quietly off into the hollow, and two or three of their calves trotted after them out of the bushes, munching the young cane-stalks as they lifted their pillars of legs and their tufty little tails, when I passed a fire of sticks blazing under a slab of rock, with the judge's guinea-fowl plucked and roasting before it from a string, the bowman's tarpaulin and his pipe lying near by—a sight that doubled the horror in me, to know he had left the boat at all; and no doubt, as I thought, taken fright and run off, man-o'-war's-man though he was. I made three springs over the stones down to the water, terrified to look in, hearing it, as I did, splash and wash about the sides, up among the leaves of the trees, while a couple of monstrous brutes were to be seen by the light in the midst of it, still wallowing about, and seeming to enjoy sending the whole pool in wide rings and waves as far as it would go, with the noise besides; the one-half swimming and the biggest standing aground as he poured the water out of his long trunk all over his back, then broke off a branch and waved it to and fro like a fan round his flapping leathery ears.

“Such a moment I hope never to know again—not the least sign of the boat could I see in the green black blink of the place, after the glare above, and I stood like a madman at the thought of what the herd of monsters had *done* when they came suddenly down upon it; then I gave a wild cry, and levelled my ship's musket at the big elephant's head as he brought his small cunning eye slowly to bear upon me, dropped the branch, and began to swing his forehead, all the time

looking at me, and wading out to the shallow—by Jove! my flesh creeps at it *just now*—though I couldn't have stirred for worlds till he was close enough for me to fire into that devilish eye of his. 'Twas no more than the matter of half-a-minute—till you may fancy what I felt to catch sight, all at once, of the cutter splashing up and down in the gloom below the branches, the ladies and the Hindoo crouching down terrified together, except Violet Hyde, who stood straight, holding the boat firm in by a bough, her white face fixed through the shadow, and her hair floating out of her straw bonnet each time her head went up among the leaves, with her glittering eyes on the two elephants.

"Suddenly some heavy black figure dropped almost right over her into the boat, and she let go with a low cry, and sank down with her hands over her eyes; when they went sheering out towards the creek, the foretop-man handling his boat-hook in her bow, without his tarpaulin. As for the wild elephants, I had just time to come to myself before the foremost had his feet on the stones below me, getting cautiously out of the pool; these awkward antics of theirs being possibly signs of too much satisfaction in a bathe for them to show aught like fury, if you didn't rouse them; so I was slipping quietly round the nearest tree when I heard the cadets halloing up the hill. The old bull elephant seemed a dangerous customer to meet, and I was hurrying over the dead grass and branches to give warning, just as Sir Charles Hyde could be seen coming down before the rest, his rifle over his shoulder.

"However, he brought up the moment I sang out to stop: both the elephants were stalking off lower down into the hollow, and I dropped behind the slab where Tom Wilkes had been roasting his bird, when some fool of a cadet let drive at the bull elephant from above, hitting him fair on the front. You heard the rifle-bullet hit slap against it as if on an anvil: the she elephant made off at a fast trot, but the big brute himself turned round on the moment, lifting up his trunk straight aloft with a sharp trumpeting scream through it, and looked round till his small red eye lighted on the judge, who seemed quite out of breath from his sport.

"'The fire! that fire, for God's sake, Mr Westwood, else I am lost!' called out Sir Charles, in a calm distinct key from where he stood with his eye fixed on the elephant, and could

see me, too—a moment or two before the huge round-backed lump of a brute came running round into the track, stumbling heavily up the dead branches of the fallen trees and the dry guinea-grass, with a savage roar between his two white tusks—and I saw what the judge meant just in time to throw over the whole heap of flaming cocoa-tree husk among the withered grass and stuff a few yards before the monster, as dry as tinder, while the light air coming down the gully of the mountain, drove it spreading across his course up through the twigs, and sweeping in one sudden gust of fire up to the very end of his trunk. I saw it lift over the smoke like a black serpent, then another scream from the brute, and away he was charging into the hollow again, the flame licking up among the grass astern of him, and darting from one bough to another towards the cane-brake below. I had scarce drawn a long breath and remembered the devil's own thought that had come into my head, when the judge called to me, ere he slapped me on the shoulder.

“‘You did nobly there, my dear boy,’ said Sir Charles; ‘managed it well!’ ‘Gad, it was a crisis, though, Mr Westwood!’ ‘I’m afraid, however, sir,’ said I, eyeing the crackling bushes, smoking and whitening to a dead smoulder in the sunlight, then flashing farther down as the hill-breeze rustled off, ‘I’m afraid we shall have the woods burning about our ears!’

“Down we hurried accordingly, and hailed the cutter, where, scarce had we leisure to pass a few quick words and tumble in, before I heard a shout beyond the other turn of the creek, through the end of the lagoon; then something like the cheep of ropes through blocks, with the bustle of men's feet on a deck, and next minute a perfect hubbub of cries, whether Dutch, Portuguese, English, or all together, I couldn't say—only it wasn't likely the *last* would kick up such a bother for nothing. Four or five Kroomen came leaping round and along the float of logs at the far end, their large straw hats shining in the light over their jet faces, as they peered across into the lagoon. The minute after they vanished we saw the white upper spars of a schooner slide above the farthest of the wood, and her bowsprit shoved past the turn just enough to show her sharp lead-coloured bow, with the mouth of a gun out of a port, and a fellow blowing the red end of his match behind

it. All at once the chorus of shouts and cries ceased, and a single voice sang out along the water, clear, stern, and startling, in bad Portuguese, '*Queren sieté?* who are you?' Still we gave no answer, quietly shoving off as fast as we could, the flicker of the fire in the brake behind the trees beginning to show itself through the black shade of the lagoon. '*Queren sieté?*' sang out the voice, louder than before, in a threatening way, and the logs were knocking and plashing before the schooner as the Kroomen hauled at them to make an opening. '*Amigos! Amigos!*' hailed we in turn; '*Ingleses, gentlemen!*' shouted the cadet who knew Portuguese, calling to them not to fire, for heaven's sake, else they would do us some harm. With this, the hubbub was worse than before; they plainly had some design on us, from the confusion that got up; but by that time we were pulling hard into the narrow of the river, and took the fair current of it as soon as the boat was past the falling stream we had seen before, till we were round into the next reach.

"In fact, the rate we all bent our backs at this time was pretty different from coming up: the cadets seemed hardly to feel the heat, fierce and close though it was, at thought of those that might be in our wake, and nobody spoke a word at ease till at last, after an hour's hard work, taking it in turns, we came full in sight of the Indiaman at her anchor on the broad current. The ladies blessed the very ropes hanging from her bowsprit, and we got safe aboard, where we found the two other boats had come back long before; and every one of us turned in directly after sundown, as tired as dogs.

"Well, I didn't suppose I had slept an hour, dreaming terribly wild sort of dreams about Violet Hyde and elephants, then that I'd saved her myself, and was stooping to kiss her rosy lips, when a sudden noise on deck startled me. I shoved myself into my clothes, and rushed on the quarterdeck. She had gone aground at her stern in swinging in the water the Portuguese rascal gave her, canted a little over to starboard, away from the shore; and till morning flood nothing could be done to haul her off. The fog was rolling down with the land-breeze, and the jabber in the woods again thickened the confusion, when all at once a dim flash off the shore glimmered in the white fog, and a round-shot whistled just astern, pretty well aimed for her bilge, which would have cost us some work

if it had hit. After that, however, there was no more of it, the fellow probably having spent either all his powder or his balls. As for his fort, I heard the chief officer swearing he would knock it about his ears next day—a thing that couldn't have done him much harm, certainly, unless mud were dear.

“No sooner had the men gone below, leaving the ordinary anchor-watch, than Mr Finch, to my great surprise, walked up to me, and gave me a strange suspicious look, hinting that he began to have a good guess of what I really was, but if anything new of the kind turned up, said he, he should know better what to say to me. ‘Mr Finch,’ said I, starting, ‘this won’t do, sir—you’ll either speak your mind before cabin and cuddy, or to-morrow morning, by Jove! you’ll go quietly ashore with me, sir—as I think, now you remind me of it, we settled to do, already!’ The mate’s face whitened, and he eyed me with a glare of malice, as I turned on my heel and began to walk the quarterdeck till he went below.

“However, the thought of the thing stuck to me, and I kept walking in the dark to get rid of it: the four or five men of the anchor-watch shuffling lazily about, and all thick save ahead up the river, where the land-breeze blew pretty strong, bringing now and then a faint gleam out of the mist. I was leaning against the fore-chains, listening to the ebb-time, and thinking, when I saw one of the men creeping in from the bowsprit, which you just saw, where it ran up thick into the dusk, with scarce a glimpse of the jib-boom and flying-jib-boom beyond.

“The sailor came up, touching his hat to me, and said he thought he saw something queer off the boom-end. ‘Well,’ said I gruffly, ‘go and tell your mate, then.’ I didn’t know the fellow’s voice, though it had a particular twang in it, and he wasn’t in Jacobs’ watch, I knew. ‘Why, your honour,’ he persisted, ‘I knows pretty well what you air—asking your pardon, sir—but I think you’d make more out of it nor any of the mates! It’s some’at rather skeary, sir,’ added he. Accordingly I took hold of the man-ropes and swung myself up the bowsprit, and had my feet on the foot-rope below the jib-boom, when I heard his breath, following behind me. ‘Never you trouble yourself, my man,’ said I; ‘one at a time!’ and back he went in board again—for something curious in his way struck me; but I wanted to see what he meant. I had

just got near the flying-jib, half-stowed in as it was on the boom, and I fancied, with a creep of my blood in me, I made out a man's head over the sail; but next moment a hand like a vice caught me by the throat, and some one growled out, 'Now ye infernal man-o'-war hound, I have ye—and down you goes for it!'

"The instant I *felt* it, my coolness came back; as for grappling, I couldn't, and the ebb current ran below to her bows at a rate fit to carry one out to sea in half-an-hour. I saw the whole plot in a twinkling, and never moved; instead of that I gave a sort of laugh, and followed the husky twang of the other man to a tee. 'He won't come, Harry, my lad,' said I, and my ugly friend let go before he had time to think twice. 'He be blowed!' said Harry, scornfully; 'an' why won't he, mate?' He had scarce the words out of his mouth, though, ere I took him a twist that doubled him over the spar, and down he slipped, hanging by a clutch of the sail. 'I suppose, my fine fellow,' said I, 'you forgot Fernando Po, and those nigger adventures of yours—eh?' and I went in without more ado.

"I hadn't been ten minutes on deck, however, when I heard both of them swearing something or other to the first mate. A little after Finch came forward to me, with a ship's lantern, and three or four of the men behind. 'Mr Collins, or whatever's your name, sir,' said he aloud, 'I believe you've been seen just now at the bowsprit-end, making signals or something to the shore! You're in arrest at once, sir, and no more about it!' 'What the deuce!' said I, my blood up, and pulling out a pair of pocket-pistols I had had in the boat, 'let me see the man to——' At the moment a blow of a handspike from near the mast laid me senseless on the deck, and I knew nothing more.—But I see 'tis too far gone in the night to carry out the yarn, ladies!"

CHAPTER XVII

"WELL, ma'am," resumed the commander, "I came to myself again at last, but when, how, or where, I really did not know, nor even what had been the matter with me;

except that I lay on my back upon something or other softer than the planks, my head aching like to split, and so stupid, I couldn't take the trouble to choose amongst the strange notions that came creeping over me. 'Twas pitch-dark, too, and choking hot. The sole wish I had was for a drop of water; but there I stuck in the same helpless plight, more like a nightmare than aught else; and as for *time*, if it went by what I felt, why, I might have lain, then and before, long enough for one of the Seven Sleepers. First one fancy, and then another, came looming up from over my brain, like a sail on the horizon, till my head was full of it. That ugly rascal's story got hold of me, and I thought I was stowed away below in some abominable slaver; then I was the sick captain lying in my cot dreaming, with all as still and dark as death. As my wits cleared, however, I began to hear plenty of sounds, as it were, buzzing and rustling and booming in my very ears, then far away again. Confused though I was, a horrid idea struck me as I tried to listen—that Finch and his understrappers had put me ashore in the woods or handed me over to some of those villainous blacks with the filed teeth; and the *Seringapatam* must be gone, Heaven knew how long!

“Suddenly, as if to clinch my notion, I started for a moment at the loud cry of a bell-bird, as I thought at first; but, the next instant, a sort of a thick crust seemed to clear off my hearing, and I knew it was ‘two bells’ going on deck, so that I was still on board; after which a regular bustle got up of a sudden overhead. I heard people running up the nearest ladder from below; cadets shouting and clattering, apparently with muskets and cutlasses; the creak of the davit-blocks letting down the boats, and the chief officer's voice alongside. What with my broken head, though, and the want of air and water, I felt too sick to give them a thought. It wasn't long, either, before the whole Indiaman seemed to be as quiet as a church, except one heavy pair of feet on the quarterdeck above; then that stopped as well, and I heard nothing but the dull sound of the tide through her thick outer-timbers, gurgling up and poppling along, like to make me mad for thirst. I put up my hand to my head, and found my hair on one side all sticky, and covered with cockroaches; but though the very touch of their bristly feelers made my blood creep, and the wretches began to dig with their pincers

into the wound, I was too weak to keep brushing them away as fast as they swarmed about it.

"It must have been rather some sort of swoon than a doze that I woke out of again, when I heard a man's voice not far off, through the stillness of the 'tween-decks, reading aloud, which I soon made out to be Mr Knowles's, the missionary's; and, from the key of it, it was evidently the Bible he was reading. In a little while he gave up, and another voice came in, that I knew still better. It was Violet Hyde's—low enough, but so clear at times, that it seemed to come into the dark where I lay half-senseless, and afterwards I could even call back some of the very words; then it came to a stand, and I heard her two or three times apparently answering someone I couldn't hear. All at once, the missionary struck up the first note of a psalm-tune, and her lovely voice slid into it, till there was nothing in the whole ship, as it were, but *that*—singing the old Evening Hymn—alone—such music, I thought, never was on sea or land—when down from some opening above, out of heaven, you might have fancied, fell a chorus like the sound of angels and cherubs joining in at the end, once and again; catching up the air out of her sweet tongue, and drowning it in a way to ravish one's soul, till it sank into a hush in which you could hear the missionary's voice rise, as he prayed aloud, over the whispers of the ladies and children stealing away from round the skylight—with the slight creak of the rudder, now and then, in its case abaft, and the tide bumping and tapping outside, from the deadwood at her counter to the hollow planking amidships.

"As for me, at first blush I thought it all part of my queer visions, till somehow or other I began to revive a bit, and felt for the door of the place they had boxed me up into. However, it was fast enough, and as soon as I tried to stand upright, something over my head gave me a shove down again—it being evidently one of the steward's store-rooms abaft of the cuddy, full of bags and such like lumber, where the best I could do was to stretch myself on the heap of old canvas again, groaning from sheer weakness and desperation. Just then I heard a light step coming close past the door, out of the large cabin, and I gave another groan. A dress rustled, and the foot started to the other side of the passage.

“‘For God’s sake open the door!’ said I, in a faint voice. ‘What—who—is there?’ exclaimed Miss Hyde, anxiously; but my mouth was so dry I couldn’t answer her. Next moment she was trying the handle, though to no purpose; for a little after I caught the sound of her footsteps hastening off, and once more my senses left me. It couldn’t have been more than a minute or two, however, for I heard the missionary’s voice still praying beside Captain Williamson’s cot, when a gush of air suddenly revived me, and I sat up winking at a glare of light, in which Violet Hyde’s face seemed to be hovering brighter than the lamp she had in her two hands, as she stood and gazed at me between wonder and dismay; while the steward held the door only half open behind her, peeping in at me with one eye like a fellow watching a hyena in a cage. ‘Miss!—miss!’ said he, trying to shove the door to again, ‘take care—he’s a pirate, ma’am, he is! The chief officer’ll blow me up for it, your ladyship!’ ‘Mr Westwood!’ exclaimed she, pushing it wide in spite of him, ‘what—what is this!—you are all over blood, Mr Westwood! Oh, are you wounded?—what can be—run, run for something,’ said she to the steward—‘where is the surgeon?’ ‘The doctor’s gone with the rest of ’em, miss,’ said he. With this I took hold of something to scramble up, bringing down a bag of cabin-biscuit over me, and got on my legs in the midst of the dust; but grim enough I must have looked, with my face like a North American Indian’s, and the cockroaches sticking in my hair, as I stumbled out of the corner. The little Cockney of a steward seemed to think me dangerous, for all I saw of him next moment was his striped gingham jacket vanishing round a bulkhead aft. ‘Oh,’ stammered I, leaning against the doorpost, ‘it’s—it’s nothing, after all—only—a little water!’ The truth was, my brain felt so confused still, that I really was not quite sure how the case stood—whether I hadn’t in fact bowed up my jib too taut that night, and tumbled on my head, or kicked up some row or other; so I suppose I must have looked rather ashamed, which the young lady appeared to notice, by the expression of her face as she moved towards the cuddy, and slipped quietly through one of the folding-doors. ‘Hush!’ said she, gravely, holding up her finger, as she came out again and closed it, carrying a couple of decan-

ters and a glass; 'poor Captain Williamson seems asleep—he was removed there this evening for air.' As I drank one tumbler of water after another, I fancied the young lady watched me curiously; however, I had scarce quenched my thirst when my own ideas got clear enough, as well as my tongue, to give an offhand account of what had happened. Violet Hyde started, and her voice faltered, as she said, 'Then—then you must have been shut up here all day—oh, how cruel of them! so hot, too! Oh, what a wonder you were not actually——' 'All day!' said I—'what day is it, then, Miss Hyde?' 'It is Sunday evening!' answered she, the tears rushing somehow or other into her eyes. 'Oh, how glad I am that I happened to pass! But your head—what a dreadful wound you must have got, Mr Westwood!' continued she; 'something must be done to it, *indeed!*'

"What the sweet young creature hesitated and blushed about for the first time, I never guessed; but I can't help thinking that anything short of an angel would have laughed at the ridiculous figure I must have cut, with powdered biscuit added to the blood, the hair, and the cockroaches—although my worthy friend's handspike from behind the foremast had laid the bone bare, so that the bleeding saved it from a lump. I hardly know how it came about, but, five minutes after, there I was sitting on the planks of the 'tween-decks, while the charming girl herself stooped over me with a basin in one hand and a sponge in the other—the muslin sleeves tucked half up off her two round white arms, as she began to wash the blood carefully off the place. I couldn't stand it a minute, however. To feel her fairy fingers soiling themselves in such dirty work, for such a fellow as me, Ned Collins, made me shiver all over; so bolt upright I started, carrying away the sponge in the neck of my coat, and squeezing a teacupful of water down my back at every wriggle—while my lovely sick-nurse stood with one pretty little wrist out, betwixt alarm lest she had hurt me, and surprise at my life-like condition. After giving my face a wipe, however, and swallowing a glass or two of wine, with some of the biscuit I had knocked down, I felt wonderfully well, except for an ache at the top of my head. The next thing that occurred to me, of course, was to have my friend the mate made aware of his mistake; but as for the curious quietness

of the Indiaman at that hour, even of a Sunday evening, I couldn't understand it, and I looked for a cap to go on deck with immediately. The young lady seemed to be looking up the after-hatchway, and listening, I thought, and the lady passengers could be heard talking about the poop; but when Violet Hyde turned round, and our eyes met again, I caught an anxious expression in them that puzzled me. 'Do you think it will be long before we shall hear them?' said she, next moment. 'Who?—whom?' asked I, hastily. 'Oh!' said she, starting, 'you could not have known they had gone, Mr Westwood. Tell me, Mr Westwood,' said she, coming nearer to me, putting her hand lightly on my arm, and glancing into my face, 'tell me, did you not know that *that* vessel was in the river?' 'Vessel, Miss Hyde?' I said, looking at her steadily in turn. 'It's all one riddle to me—what vessel do you mean, madam?' 'The—the pirate!' exclaimed she, breathlessly; and turning towards the hatchway again, while I stood eyeing her stupidly, all abroad, so to speak. 'For heaven's sake, tell me what you mean, Miss Hyde!' said I, putting my hand to my head. 'Ah, but you look so white—you are not well yet, sir,' said she, softly. 'To think how all the passengers were amused, and even papa too, when they heard this morning of your being arrested as a—a—— But nobody could know you were so hurt, Mr Westwood. Then when some of the sailors came back, and said they had seen the French ship in disguise——' 'By Jupiter! the *brig* they meant?' I broke out. 'Then, good heavens! they must have painted her lead-colour, and turned her back into a schooner! *That* was she, for a thousand!' 'And, you know, yesterday morning, sir,' continued the young lady, '*you* told me you knew our friends were there, instead of being lost, as we thought!'

"'Yes, yes!' said I, 'there must be some bad scheme at the bottom; but by morning we'll have a slap at them, for certain. For my part I feel——' 'Why,' said Miss Hyde, turning anxiously to me, 'almost everybody in the ship has gone *already*. Whenever the truth was discovered, there was such a confusion amongst the gentlemen and the officers that they could not think of anything else; and, as soon as the sun had set, they all crowded into the boats and went away together, to surprise the pirates in the dark.' 'Good God!'

exclaimed I, in sheer amazement, and making toward the hatchway. 'Miss Hyde! *do* you say so!—How many were there then, ma'am?' I asked. 'Oh,' said she, quickly, 'I am so glad there was such a number—five boats quite full, I believe. Not a single gentleman would stay, except little Tommy's father, who is upstairs—and papa was one of the first to get down into a boat with his rifle. But do you not think,' added she, with somewhat of a tremble in her voice, 'do you not think the people in the French ship will yield, or at least give our friends up?'

"'I hope to goodness they may!' said I, turning away from the eagerness those soft eyes of hers glittered with, as she leant out before the faint glimmer through the cuddy-door, the light of the lamp in her hand shining bright over her hair and her shoulders; while the gloomy stillness of the whole ship, below, made me think of the voice that had hailed us through the lagoon, and the same man's face—as I had no doubt now it was—when I saw it aboard the brig at sea, before the thunder-squall came on. I almost fancied I saw Finch and *him* meeting at the present moment, with the mate's awkward look as the Frenchman's sword flashed across him—my fingers gripped together for the handle of a cutlass, to go tumbling up amongst the men over the schooner's bulwarks in the creek—when all at once another notion darted into my head, to remind me where we were in the meantime; I ran to the companion and sprang up the stair on to the quarterdeck.

"It was a hot, still night; but the change from the closeness below to the deck seemed to make quite a new man of one in an instant. I jumped on the nearest carronade-slide, and looked round to see how the land lay, which at first was difficult enough to do. They had got the Indiaman fair afloat again, I found, a little more off the shore, and farther down—the starboard gun I stood upon being, as I guessed by the shape of the trees, about opposite the mud fort, which Finch had probably been peppering at as he threatened, since the port was open, and two or three shot lying in the scuppers beside it. 'Twas somewhere nigh-hand eight o'clock of the evening, I think, and quite black on the nearest bank—you couldn't even make out the top of the woods against the sky; but another cable-length would have served to open the lower

reach of the river, where it came brimming up full round the point with the night flow, sending a floating sort of a glimmer along in the dusk over against us. One could even pitch upon a line where it ran side by side with the heavy shadow that took in the ship, going across to the swampy-looking shore off our larboard side, and blackening away up-stream, while the dim bubbles and eddies swept out of the one into the other. I could just catch the low, deep roar of the sea more than a mile off, muffled by the trees and mangroves on both sides between it and us; and, the tide having come almost to a standstill, you heard the ripple against her bows get gentler and gentler, with a weak plash here and there in the dark among the grass and sedge alongshore, which seemed to wake up a chirping mutter in the bushes—and at times you'd have thought something came wading out from the edge; till in a few minutes both river and forest had sunk, as it were, into a sleep. The quieter they got, however, the more uneasy I began to feel at the state I saw things in upon deck; absolutely not a soul to be seen from wheel to bowsprit, except one man walking back and forward by himself on the forecastle, and giving a look now and then carefully enough over at the cable; Mr Brown being on the poop with his family and the knot of ladies, talking under their breath; while the old Scotch mate could be seen through the cabin skylight, leaning his bald crown over his two hands, under the lamp near the captain's cot, to listen to the missionary, as he sat gravely whispering and looking at him through his spectacles.

“For my part, I hadn't a doubt but the ship had been watched from shore all along; and there was no saying at present *who* might be keeping an eye upon her, even if this affair of the French brig weren't to catch us in some deep trick or other. If it were really she, and lying where we caught a glimpse of her the day before, 'twould take three or four hours, at night, even to pull there and back again; but as for her being an ordinary pirate, I had a strong notion she was no such thing, and the stranger I thought the whole matter throughout.

“As I peered over the bulwarks into the thick of the tall jungle, the showers of fireflies came here and there flickering out from under the big leaves, lighting up the green of them for a moment, and dancing across a black mouth in the bank

nearest us, like emerald sparks. By this time, too, the starlight was growing large out over the dusk, till the whole height of the sky had heaved itself above our upper spars, clear as crystal, and sprinkled full of soft silver points, that gathered and got brighter as you looked. One could see the whole breadth of the river floating slowly between, with lazy brown swirls of current twisting and curling round the point, and the eddies rising in the middle, to where the water glistened among the dark wet mangrove stems, or some oily swell near the edge went lipping in with the gleam of a star lengthened upon it. Hot and close though the night still was, while the rank smell of the mud came at times into our nostrils from one side, and of growing leaves from the other, yet it was pleasant enough after being shut up for ever so many hours in a dark hole below.

"Neither did I think there was any fear of trouble from the natives while this lasted; but the haze that seemed to be oozing out over the mass of woods, with now and then a cool breath of air from up-river, showed what a fog we might expect as soon as the land-wind began to blow strong from inland. Sometimes I fancied I heard cries in the distance among the woods, over the croaking of the frogs which seemed to get up as one listened; then again I could make out the hollow booming of the African tree-drum, with a chorus of horns and savage-like shouts, apparently filling up every break in the hum that rose off the ground—far enough away, however, to satisfy me the blacks were only making merry before turning in.

"As for Tom Westwood, he had plainly gone with the boats, clerical though he was, which didn't go to set my mind greatly at rest, knowing him to be one of your slap-dash fellows when roused; and, either way, it couldn't do much good to a man hailing for a parson to be particularly active on boat-service. But you may easily conceive what a pitch one's anxiety for the upshot rose to, at every whisper and hush of the woods, and every glimmer of the water far astern, where the upper reach could just be seen brimming pale out of the shadow, against a thick fringe of misty cane-clumps, topped with tall palms and cocoas—their stems wavering in the thin haze, and their dark crowns seemingly floating off above it like heads coming away from the bodies, as

the heavy blue land-fog began to gather like smoke away behind.

“The flow of tide having of course set the Indiaman’s stern up-stream, the ladies on the poop could be seen clustered across the taffrail, with the careful married gentleman in the middle of them, more dignified than ordinary, as they one and all strained their eyes into the dusk before them; when one of the men came down the poop-stairs behind me, and, on turning, I saw to my surprise that it was Jacobs, he being still more astonished to see me on deck. I soon found, to my great relief too, that, what with the anchor-watch and some lads, there were still seven or eight of the crew aboard, whom I advised him to get on deck and make them keep a bright lookout—more especially as he was one of the boatswain’s mates, and had charge of the watch at the moment; for, to tell the truth, seriously speaking, I had more real fear, all along, of some attack from the negroes and Don José, than of the French craft they *would* fancy a pirate, whatever might be her reason for stowing away Rollock and his companions—although I told Jacobs I had no doubt now but it *was* actually she. ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ said Jacobs in a low voice, giving his trousers an uneasy hitch up, ‘not a doubt on it, Mr Collins. Black Harry and his mates clapped eyes on her this forenoon, when they went up for water—so they said, anyway!’ ‘What, Bob?’ said I, starting—‘was it *that* scoundrel? Did they *not* see her then?’ ‘Well, sir,’ replied Jacobs, ‘as I gather, ’twas rather one of her boats they fell ath’art of. You’ll mind Harry was in the cutter that time you boarded the brig at sea, Mr Collins, a week or two ’gone—so, you see, he knowed one or two o’ the crêw at once; and in course, sir, comin’ across one another hereaway, they’d make shift to have a talk, but none on ’em ever guessed about our passengers bein’ aboard of her, till——’ ‘Did the fellow himself think they were pirates, then?’ asked I, more anxiously than before—a shivering dread of I didn’t know what beginning to creep on me, as I turned suddenly round to eye the river glooming away up from the starlight, through into the blue heaps of hazy forest.

“‘Why, sir,’ answered Jacobs hastily, ‘he’s a desperate sort, is that ’ere Foster, if it was only what I’ve heard him *say*, swinging sound asleep in’s hammock. I wouldn’t tell

as much otherways; but I tell ye what it is, sir, my mind misgived me o' this here overnight boat-business! It's my sober notion, Leftenant Collins,' gravely added he, seeing I still looked anxiously to him—'it's my notion, if that craft's aught of a pirate, Harry Foster and more nor half of his watch 'ud think no more o' joining her, on a chance, than *one* on 'em did o' taking you that clip with a handspike this morning, sir! As for this here brig, Master Ned, your honour,' continued he, 'what did she do, but, to my fancy, she's kepted a eye on us ever since we first fell foul of her?'

"'Jacobs! Jacobs!' I broke out directly, 'get every hand up on the foc'sle at once, with everything like arms you can find—for God's sake look sharp, and then bear a hand here to have the carronades fore and aft run in, and stuffed full of some old iron or other, as we can't have grape!' Hurried as it was, I saw the whole thing—a regular deep-laid plot it seemed, too—and the first time I had seen light as to what the strange brig could be after. Here had she dodged us, no doubt, for weeks; got hold of our friends by accident, which would give her a clue how to find us anywhere during the rest of our voyage, as we were too strong-handed for her *then*. 'Twas very likely they thought we should suspect something, and follow wherever they could manage to lure the Indiaman—or else possibly they had run into the river the very same day we did, and perhaps seen us out of the haze which hid the land from us that morning; and *now*, if they had studied it for years, they couldn't have contrived a cleverer trap than this that Finch and the passengers had run their heads into, with more than a dozen mutinous dogs, at least, in their company. A prize like an East-Indiaman was worth taking some trouble about, of course; while such villains as Foster and his messmates, I knew, would fancy a Bengal nabob carried untold treasures with him, and it was plain to me they had something like an understanding with the stranger's crew. 'Ay, ay, sir,' said Jacobs, in answer to me; 'hows'ever, the first mate left word with Mr Macleod he'd send up a rocket and a blue-light in case o' a good success, or else come back with the boats.' 'Heaven help them, Jacobs!' said I, taking a hasty turn or two, 'for *we* can't. But there *is* something more horrid in the matter than I fancied—only all we can do is to look to ourselves and the ship! Harkye,

though, Bob,' added I, following him; 'bring up the beef-kid, will ye? I feel terribly sharp-set, notwithstanding.'

"I came back and looked from the quarterdeck down the skylight, where the second mate still sat with his elbows on the table, apparently listening to the missionary; when the good man suddenly took off his spectacles and peered under Macleod's broad fists, as an undeniable snore broke out between them; then he glanced toward the captain, who seemed dozing in his cot, raised his mild eyes for a moment through the opening up to the blue starry sky swimming out above, put on his spectacles again, and taking up the Bible, he leant back in his chair to read, as if there were neither pirates, savages, nor aught a man need dread, in the world.

"'Strange!' I thought. 'Yet, after all isn't there a soul below there, ere a few hours, will go higher aloft than the smallest star that twinkles over the main-truck yonder? And who knows how many of us may——' However, I saw Jacobs hurrying aft again, and the rest coming up out of the fore-peak; so hard to work we set for the best part of an hour, which it took us to get the guns on deck made serviceable, and to find powder enough. Not a cutlass or pistol was left on board, so we had only two or three axes and pikes, with a rusty musket or two, and handspikes, certainly, to spare.

"As soon as we had taken breath, 'Now, Jacobs, my man,' said I, 'send out the boys to loose the jibs and fore-topsail—let's hoist the yard, too, with the sail clued up—all ready for slipping her cable at five minutes' warning!' It can't do any harm—and I've no more doubt,' said I, 'than if I saw it, we shall have that schooner coming down with the ebb upon us!' 'Tide'll turn in little better nor an hour, sir,' said Jacobs, when we had got this quietly done. 'And by that time the breeze will be blowing with it,' said I, 'bringing down the fog too, however—but keep a bright lookout aloft for the signal, Jacobs! If you see it, or the boats, good and well. But I tell you what it is, Jacobs,' added I, firmly, 'should it be the schooner instead, that instant we must cut and run for it! I shall carry the ship out to sea, if I can, as I brought her in—where we may have a better chance with her in the morning, or get clear off, perhaps!'

"There being no more we could do, and having instructed Jacobs to go down and rouse Mr Macleod himself if he

saw the signal, I kept stealing back and forward on one side of the quarterdeck alone. The river was still as a mill-pond, except where it trembled in long streaky gleams from the sky, else I should at once have slipped cable and begun to go down, leaving the boats to come after us, if they did come, as they best could. There wasn't a breath of air yet, either, save what seemed now and then to waft out of the thick woods, and to bring the whole whispering buzz of them stifled together along the face of the water, with the heavy scent of the aloes and trailers on the bank, meeting the warm steam that crept across from the mangroves on the opposite shore. A hundred notions ran through my head, as I walked, of what might happen: whether the boats would miss the schooner altogether, and she drop down upon us in the meantime, either by the creek or the river—or whether Foster and his crew of Wapping blackguards would carry out what I'd no doubt they had at heart.

“But at any rate, as for a set of passengers and merchant sailors catching an armed schooner asleep, with one like that Frenchman in her, I had his fierce dark face too much before me whenever I thought of him to fancy the thing for a moment. That *that* man was in command of the stranger craft, and had some scheme in hand he would stir heaven and earth to carry out, unless you ground his head to powder, was an idea that came shivering sharp into me as I kept watching the dark mouth of the creek astern, and the glimmering reach beyond—looking almost to see the schooner's bowsprit shoot out of one of them, tide or wind though there was none. Frigate to frigate in a breeze, in fact, I should have minded my weather-gage pretty cautiously with *him*, if a seaman he was; but if he were bent on having the old *Seringapatam* at present, by heaven! what I feared was worse than either plunder or walking the plank—seeing there was a prize the judge had left on board, for which I felt a free-cruising captain would give all the treasures that fellows like Foster might think an Indian nabob had in his portmanteau.

“In fact, I saw Violet Hyde moving restlessly, two or three times, near the break of the poop, as she watched the dim opening astern, while her lady's maid kept close behind her, afraid to stay below; and waiting, idle as I was, I almost began for the time to forget everything else that might be going on, at thought of *her* being only a few feet off, with no

one by but the servant-maid. The touch of her soft hand about my head an hour ago came back on me, and the drowsy creeping kind of hush of the tropical night seemed to bewilder my senses at every rustle of her dress—I shan't even deny that the notion seized me for half-a-minute, were the schooner to make prisoners of the boats' crews, how I might carry the Indiaman out to sea, and go Lord knows where with her. Then the idea of defending her, and saving her, made one wild with excitement—I felt as if I had the strength of twenty in me, almost longing to see the pirates' faces, especially the dark Frenchman's, and to wait till they came close on, when we could let drive into them, expecting to find us helpless. I made up my mind that Mr Brown there, and the missionary too, should work at a gun as soon as they were wanted—when, trip, trip, I heard her footstep coming down the poop-stair behind me, and stood trembling and tingling to my very finger-ends.

“‘Mr Westwood,’ said her low sweet voice, and I turned round. ‘Yes, madam,’ I answered, gulping down my breath. ‘Have you heard—do you see anything?’ ‘They’ve scarce had time yet,’ said I; ‘of course the more cautious they are the better!’ ‘Oh!’ continued she, her hands clasping together, and the shawl falling half off her head to one shoulder—‘oh, if there should really be bloodshed at this moment—the river looks so fearfully gloomy and silent! How is it possible to bear this suspense any longer, sir? If we could *only* think they were not pirates after all!’ ‘Miss Hyde,’ replied I seriously, as she seemed to wish me to speak, ‘I can’t have any doubt in my own mind what they are!’ ‘How! *what*? for mercy’s sake!’ exclaimed she, gazing earnestly at me. ‘You musn’t suppose all pirates to be bloody murdering ruffians, Miss Hyde,’ said I hastily. ‘There’s one man belonging to that craft yonder, *I’m* sure, if he saw—if he stood where I stand just now, so near an angel——’ The young lady shrank back with a startled look; but I wasn’t master of myself longer, and out I broke: ‘For God’s sake forgive me, but I—I’d serve you like a slave—*dearest* Miss Hyde. I’ll stand up to the last drop of my blood before——’ ‘Mr West—wood!’ was the answer, hanging betwixt surprise and terror. But I burst out with, ‘Confound that name!—my name is *not* Westwood, madam, and I’m no relation at all to the gentleman in India.

I never said so, but your father mistook——’ ‘Who then—what are you—what design have you?’ was her broken question; and she put one hand on the bulwarks as if for support, looking round from me to the woods, the river, and back to the ship and me again, so pale and terrified-like, that I could have cursed myself for my stupidity.

“‘Good heaven, Miss Hyde!’ said I, lowering my voice, ‘I do believe you take *me* for one of the stranger’s crew?’ ‘No—no!’ faltered Violet; ‘I—I—but the suspicions I heard to-day—you—you frightened me, sir!’ ‘Surely,’ said I, ready to kneel at her feet, ‘*you* must have known the truth of the matter, Miss Hyde. Why, here have I come afloat at a day’s warning, bound for the East Indies—and all because I saw *you* that evening at the garden-door! Oh, for kindness’ sake, Miss Hyde, pardon my boldness—but I couldn’t let slip the only chance of telling you—it took me unawares, in fact! I’m not such a fool as to fancy that such a fellow as I can have the least hope in the world; but—but——’ She stood quite still, not uttering a word, with her face turned from me, but I could notice the colour was all come back to her cheek, and more—and saw the shining falls of her loose hair heaving on the bosom of her white muslin dress, as it rose and fell gently. I leant over the bulwarks and ventured to look half-round; when, oh heavens! how did my heart quicken in me to see the least bit of a smile come over her lips, though her eyes were dropped toward the gun close by. I can’t say what I might have been bold enough to do, in the whirl of the moment—when suddenly she started, drew the shawl up from her shoulders again, and seemed to recollect the whole case of the boats with a shudder, as she glanced wildly again up the reach astern of us, bringing me to myself, too, at the same time; and I stood looking with her, intent to mark the first turn of the tide.

CHAPTER XVIII

“THE night was warm enough, however, in all conscience; and, if one had been fit to eye it calmly, a glorious scene to see was the sky that rose above our heads, glowing dark as

indigo-blue through the rigging aloft, as the ship's tall spars stood up into it, from one rope-ladder to another; her main-truck like a white button against the midmost depth, with every line running distinct to its place across knots of stars, and single bright ones piercing sharp through the black squares of the shrouds; while all round from her it widened away, glittering and seething with lights, that brought the woods looming out bigger and blacker along the nearest shore, making the dirty brown river look dirtier and drearier than before, as the steam spread over the close mangrove bank on the other side, and began to creep low out upon the water like fleeces of wool, with the stars here and there sparkling from the far horizon through the straggling fringe of cocoas beyond, and the huge bloated baobabs that twisted up out of the tall guinea-grass, as if their roots were in the air. The next glance I caught from Violet Hyde showed nothing but the distress she was in; and I walked forward to hail Jacobs on the fore-to'-gallant-yard, asking if he saw the signal yet. 'No, no, sir,' answered he, 'not a sign on it up to this time.'

"So back again I went, gloomy enough myself, but trying to keep up my countenance, and saying I was sure we should see the boats come down with the tide when it turned.

"'Have you noticed the stars aloft, Miss Hyde?' said I, in a cheerful way, to take off her thoughts till the upshot came; 'they never saw these in Europe, nor a night like this!' She looked up, and for a moment or two the soft blue dark of the hollow seemed to sweep round both of us, catching you up into it; the Milky Way falling over to westward, like a track astern of the great star-ship down in the south; and Orion's figure to be made out overhead, with the belt about him, stretching off west out of the Milky Way—the Serpent streaming far up to his foot; then Magellan's two shining bits of cloud, and the dim one, seaward. There were patches to be seen blacker than ink, too, where you seemed to look *through* the sky, while every now and then a meteor shot far across it and fell, leaving a trail like a silver thread. 'Twas terrible, though, to see up into it, far away as they stood, and as steady as if we weren't there, when heaven only knew *what* might come down river next half-hour. I felt her shoulder touch me as she leant back—the starlight glistening in her blue eyes, and nothing

but *it* between her lovely young face and the stars; and I don't know how, but it appears to me I thought during that half-minute as I never thought before, and as if I looked off the other side of the world for the first time—yet you couldn't expect a fellow's brain to breed such notions in a merchantman's fore-castle, or a frigate's steerage or gun-room, as it did beside an Indiaman's bulwarks, entering for a moment or two into the very feelings of a creature like the judge's daughter, when her warm breath almost lighted on his cheek!

"Next minute I noticed over my shoulder, low down in the deep blue swell of the south, where the five bright stars of the Southern Cross were gleaming nearly upright over the top of a cocoa-clump on the opposite bank, for all the world like some diamond ornament; and I pointed it out to her, though I knew by the bearings of it how far the night was gone toward the middle. Its top and bottom stars flashed out of the pure face of heaven like jewels, each fit to buy the Great Mogul ten times over. The dark fringes of her two eyes showed brown over the light in them, while it looked like the hearts in violet flowers, as she turned. 'At sea,' said I, 'we mids used to know by it when eight-bells would come, to let us go below and turn in. Soon after you lose sight of the Pole-star you rise the Southern Cross—and the men had a notion it was a brooch the Virgin Mary lost from her breast, in the daylight, when she went up to heaven! 'Twas her son gave it her, they fancied, but 'twas always to be *found* in the dark—though, meanwhile, 'tis a sign to the Flying Dutchman, as he tries to weather the Cape, that he'll be forgiven at the day of judgment—so that's the reason it has the power of showing what's o'clock until *then*, and why the Cape is the Cape of Good Hope!' 'Yes, yes!' said she; 'in Paul and Virginia, I remember, when they were so unwilling to part, *it*——' But she stopped with a blush, as her eye met mine; and we were both so confused that, before I knew, I found myself beginning to stammer out all manner of tender words, I daresay, and to whisper her first name near her ear, she scarce seeming to mark the difference—in fact *one* bewildered sort of look was all she gave me at the moment, as if she were listening more to the hum rising out of the woods than to me.

"Once or twice the still shine of the lamp up through the open skylight-frame drew my eye to it in spite of me—it was the only light burning in the ship, and you saw the gleam of it from the starboard port-window of the cuddy, drawn in as it was for air, thrown on the dusky water, not many fathoms, apparently, off the jungly bank nearest the ship. I can't tell you how, but somehow or other the appearance of it there, like a yellow break in the misty shadow, letting one see the very froth floating over it, and the muddy tint of the river on its edges—with the hush below us in the cabin—awed me more than aught besides; and whether it was from mixing the thing with what happened afterwards, or how—perhaps the missionary moved inside—but when I noticed the gleam on the water quiver and darken for a moment, then shine out again, I felt I *knew* it was then the captain's spirit passed away. I slipped with a thrill of my blood to the skylight, and saw Macleod still asleep, the missionary settling his spectacles on his nose to read again, as if *he* had looked up too when I did; while the cot and bedclothes were hanging white in the shade as before, except that the knees were drawn up, and the head turned away. He might be dozing, though it came into my head I had heard the captain say he should last till the *turn of the tide*; and in fact all the sick men I ever knew die, unless there was something uncommon, died as the ebb came on. As I stepped back to the young lady's side, I could mark the Southern Cross by the after-edge of the main-mast, sparkling fairly upright above the cocoa-nut trees, and Orion high up nor'westward seemed farther away—it was midnight. The thought flashed through me how something in the sky could draw up a man's soul, as the shot at his hammock-foot would sink his body down deep through blue water at sea—but the first light splash of the ebb alongside brought me back to the case in hand, and I gave Jacobs a quiet sign to look out sharp aloft.

"‘Hark!’ whispered Violet Hyde, suddenly, glancing sideways to me with her ear eagerly toward the shore, and putting back her hair with one hand to listen—‘what is *that*?’ I thought at first I could see a stir along the thick aloë-bushes, and make out the rustle of leaves; but the land-breeze was sighing in puffs through them already, and the fog beginning to creep out from over the bank, as if to meet the muddy

stream from the other side; till next minute I heard what she meant, like wild cries from human creatures half choked, or out of breath, sounding along deep in the woods; then free out it rose in a clear chorus of savage screams and yells, and then seemed smothered up again. 'Twas only a pack of jackals hunting from thick bush to opening, but Violet pressed closer to me as the devilish noise drew nearer the river; and suddenly my hand met hers—to say what I felt, passes me—but the very next moment I had it fast clasped in my own, though I hadn't time enough to say what the thing was, before the entire pack of throats seemed to break out right upon the bank a little higher up than the ship, barking and yelping like the very hounds of Satan. 'Tis only the chase has taken to the water!' continued I, in a low voice, as the infernal uproar stopped at once.

"However, *then*, the sweet girl was trembling like a leaf; and, by Jove! madam, take it as you will, the man who wouldn't have had one arm round her before that, could have been no sailor—that's all. 'For God's sake, dear, dear Miss Hyde,' whispered I—'dearest Violet, let me take you under shelter—we may have dangerous work before long!'

"I started up from the bulwarks, in fact, for the river by this time was all aplash alongshore in the haze, and under the ship's bends, beginning to run past her side seaward, as the branches and loose stuff came floating out with the current off a point; the sedge and bulrushes opposite us moaning and clattering, as the breeze rushed through them, bringing the fog rolling down stream. The mist was closing overhead from both sides already, though the stars sparkled through the middle yet; and I knew the moon must be rising, fit to show us anything that came out of the upper reach. 'No—no!' faltered out Violet, in tears, as she slid herself quickly out of my hold, drawing the shawl over her with a shudder; 'I cannot go inside till we see them come back—my dear, dear father, I must see that he is safe!' 'By heaven! though,' exclaimed I, jumping upon the carronade to look out, 'those brutes are swimming after the deer, and the stream is bringing them down on our stern!' The Indiaman was swinging her stern down to the ebb, and through the dusk I fancied I just saw their black heads tipping here and there out of the water, amongst the drift-

wood and froth, where the light from the cabin port swung slowly into the mist, with the ship. However, they went past; and she hadn't got her bow fair to the current, when a man from the bow sung out, 'Hurrah! here's the boats now!'

"'Where, where?' said I, springing forward to the fore-chains, while the young lady stood as if her life hung on the next word. 'There, sir, right ahead almost as she swings,' said the sailor; and thick as the blue fog was close to us, the cream-coloured haze filling up the reach of the river beyond, was lighting up like white gauze with the moon, in which I saw two or three black objects come dropping out as if from the creek, their oar-blades flashing in it. But I thought they crowded together awkwardly, like maimed craft, and the weight seemed to keep them down, unless, as I hoped, they were waiting for the others. 'No, no, Mr Collins!' whispered Jacobs, suddenly sliding down a top-mast backstay to my side, 'they're canoes, sir!' 'By the Lord! so they are,' said I, seeing a flourish of the paddles that betrayed them. 'They're hanging on yet, though, to catch us napping—keep cool, Bob, my man,' continued I, for my spirits rose, to find my fears mistaken as yet about our boats. 'But the cable—the cable!' added I hastily—'by George, they'll try to cut it, as sure as fate! Ready there—don't fire a shot till they're close—nothing but stupid nigger heathens after all, my lads! Quick, a couple of you,' said I, 'bowse up the jib at once, and down foretopsail sheets—brace the yard sharp up, to cast her head down if they do cut! If we go aground, Jacobs, we're gone!'

"'Twas vain to think of hindering them, few as we were, and scarce able to see what they did for the fog; but the land-breeze already blew pretty fresh, and the ebb rushing on her bows made the Indiaman heave to it as her jib rose from the boom. I had no time to stand upon ceremony—to think of the pilotage again—with the savages, the narrow channel in the dusk, and the breakers together, was quite enough.

"In the very nick of such a breathless moment, I had just fancied I caught the stroke of their paddles coming on—when all at once, out of the open cabin-skylight aft, rose a sound, the like of which I never heard in my life—between a yell and a cry; but the mouth of the skylight seemed to send

it up higher than the mastheads, loud and long, into the slit of starlight between the fog. For a single second the marrow curdled in my bones, and I lost all thought even of the canoes ahead, 'twas so unearthly; till, catching a glimpse of Violet's white figure crouching in terror to the round-house door, I rushed aft, and looked down at the cuddy. It was all black as midnight below, the stink of the swinging lamp coming out; but by the horrible tumbling, staggering, struggling sound inside, you'd have thought it full of some awful thing, doing God knows what in the place—then a thump and a groan. I scarce believe I could have mustered heart to go down the companion and see—till next moment the Scotch mate's bare head and his shoulders came thrusting up out of the stair, wrestling wildly with three or four pitch-black naked figures—the narrow booby-hatch hindering them from sticking together to him, except one that leapt out almost on his back, aiming a fierce stroke with a club at his skull. Quick as thought, however, my coolness had come back to me, and I just sent the bullet from the ship's musket I had snatched up fair flash through his lungs, the blood spouting out of his mouth almost over us, as he spun round with his club in the air, and fell back—while smash after smash I brought the stock of my piece down on the crowns of the others, trying to get on deck too thick together; and Macleod was doing the same like a man, at the skylight, where they were catching at the edge of the frame. The shrieks of the ladies came off the poop above; and as for the men, they were dodging under the forecastle bulwarks as they fired at the canoes ahead, from the spears and arrows that came whistling over, and quivering into the planks near me. What else the fiendish wretches might be doing I didn't know, but I had no sooner managed to shove the scuttle over the booby-hatch, the second mate loading as fast as he could, and blazing away down into the skylight like a perfect devil, lighting up the black faces and sharp teeth of the savages below at every shot, rushing back, than I felt the Indiaman was broadside on to the tide and current, sweeping down to open the next reach with her jib and topsail full to the land-breeze. I sprang back to seize the wheel, near which Violet Hyde stood cowering with her two hands over her eyes, when, in the midst of it all, you may fancy my horror to catch a glimpse of one hideous black

stealing round towards her in the shadow of the round-house, with a hatchet gleaming in one hand, and the other stretched out to clutch her. 'Twas the work of a second. I made one leap, and barely caught the blow on my gun-stock, as he took hold of her dress; then over he and I rolled on the deck, first one uppermost, then the other, till I found his strength was too much for me, breathless as I was.

"The fellow had his huge hand round my throat, choking me, and ready to spring up with the hatchet in his other fist—'twas the mulatto that had been with the Portuguese—when I saw Violet Hyde dart forward between me and the stars, throwing her large shawl round his head and arm from behind him, and holding it tight, her face turned away white as death. The mulatto loosened his grasp and jumped up, throwing her reeling back to the door; but I was on my feet as soon as he, twisting his hatchet from his grip, and sent the edge of it with all my force clean down into his brain, through cashmere and everything. Ere he had time to pull it off, he was stretched, breast and knees up, over the carronade-slide at my feet.

"The dear girl had fainted. I lifted her, and hurried with her to the sofa in the round-house, my heart swelling toward her in a way no man can tell, though there was not a moment to stay, for when I reached the wheel again, a sight broke upon me that showed the fearful danger we were in. The savages in the cuddy could be heard plunging out of the port to swim ashore; and though the ebb-tide was taking the ship apparently clear round the woody turn, she had no sooner opened the wide reach, where the fog was scattering before the breeze, than we began to see a stretch of the nearest bank, off our starboard bow, glimmering out to a huge fire on the edge, that lighted up the thick white haze like sulphur—throwing a bloody red glow on the eddies in-shore, with two or three black canoes dipping up and down in them; a crowd of dark naked negroes rushing round the fire, bringing logs and branches to throw in, till up it blazed again; the sparks flying into the smoke, the feathery black jungle sinking back behind, and the banyan branches shooting out into it, as if they were alive, licking the crimson gleams with their sharp leaves; while a horrible noise of tree-drums beating and buffalo-horns blowing floated off to us.

"The wretches seemed to expect we were coming straight in to them, and they waited for us. And no wonder; for it wasn't till Jacobs came running aft, to tell the mate and me, that, to our horror, we found the canoes had got the rest of the cable fastened somehow or other low down to her cut-water, and were coolly towing us in by it. We could neither cut it nor dispose of them, as at every shot there were plenty more to fill places; while the helm was only enough to steer her, had she been free.

"‘Jacobs,’ said I, ‘for heaven’s sake bear a hand with two or three of these heavy shot in a hammock—let’s sling it out to the flying-jibboom end, and I’ll stand by to drop it fair over them—quick!’ Three of us ran out from the bowsprit, with the end of the line, swinging out the weight and hauling it up, till we were nearly over their heads in the foggy gleam from the blaze ashore. The cable tautened fair under us as the blacks gave a stroke ahead together with their paddles, and ‘Watch!’ I sung out above them, in a voice that made them huddle all three canoes in a lump, peering up at us. ‘Let go, my lads,’ whispered I, and down went the weight of shot full slap upon them, crash through their gunwales, leaving no more than the bits, with the woolly heads bobbing about in the stream. The second mate whirled round the spokes of the wheel, on deck, and her jib and topsail drawing the breeze right again, she began to stand out toward the middle once more. I watched the glare of the fire sinking back into the blue fog, while the hubbub of wild cries showed that they had taken the alarm, and were pushing off as fast as possible in their canoes from the bank in chase.

"The next thing I saw, two or three minutes after, was the flash of a large gun away on our starboard quarter, flaring out in the mist round the strange schooner herself, as she came swiftly down astern of us, under her two boomsails and flying-jib, the froth whitening up from her forefoot, and she crushing through amongst the canoes, letting drive at them right and left, flash after flash, and roar after roar—her deck crowded with men, too, amongst whom I thought I could make out the dark Frenchman’s broad-leafed Manilla hat. However, the wreaths of thick smoke blew curling from her towards us; and directly after nothing was to be heard but the ripple under our bows, as we went surging toward the

river's mouth, with the clear splash upon her copper coming nearer.

"Jacobs and I, as well as the other hand, hung over the boom together for a little to loose the flying-jib, then out of pure weariness, till I sent Jacobs to take the wheel and steer by my signals; for the Indiaman had the full force of current and breeze astern of her, carrying her fast toward the bar, as I guessed; while the second mate let her yaw dreadfully, from fear of going wrong. As for the schooner, we could make out her lights through the fog, the wind bringing us the sound of her cutwater—though probably they couldn't know whereabouts we were; so I hoped she might perhaps go past us in the dark, if she were actually in chase of the Indiaman, as I feared.

"However, the moment the cheep of our flying-jib hanks on the stay was heard as the sail was hoisted, a sharp hail came along the water. '*Hola!*' sang out the creaking voice of the little French skipper, who had bamboozled me so at sea. None of us answered, and I ran down the spar to be ready for what might happen, when '*Hola! où êtes-vous?*' shouted he again. '*Hullo! the Seringapatam, ahoy!*' roared our chief officer himself; to which no sooner had Macleod replied, than we caught three hearty English cheers, and next minute the schooner's canvas was looming up from the yellow glimmer of her lanterns a few fathoms on our starboard quarter—the foam hissing off her sharp bright bows, while she raced up with us. Everyone of us started at the jovial sound of old Rollock the planter's voice, shouting, '*All's right, my boys!*' as if he had risen from the dead out of the sea—the schooner slipping easily by, abreast of our high bulwarks; and the crowd of heads from stem to stern, English, French, and Kroomen, gliding past below, for all the world like a dream to most of us, with the light from the lanterns flaring up red under hats, caps, and tarpaulins, and the black shadow of their figures and small-arms thrown high in two clusters on the broad glare over her fore and main boom-sails. '*Have ye actually taken the blackguards, sir?*' hailed the Scotch mate; at which a shout of laughter ran from one end of her to the other; while one of the cadets seemingly half-drunk, could be seen staggering aft to the stern as she forged swiftly ahead, just in order to call out, '*Macleod, my old cock, comment vous portez-*

vous ? The little French master jumped up on the schooner's taffrail, waving his hand politely: '*J'aurai l'honneur pour vous conduire en débouchant, Messieurs !*' shouted he; 'follow de light een my starn !'

"In fact, by this time we were already in the suck of the channel, so that longer speaking was out of the question, as the boom of the surf could be heard wide ahead of the ship. Suddenly a broad gleam of light off the sea struck over our starboard bow, beyond the tumbling water upon the bar, and to starboard the rocky headland broke through the fog rolling out with the breeze: the schooner's stern lifted glimmering before our figure-head, and we lost sight of her again, till we had swept safe round the point. Five minutes more, and both Indianan and schooner were heaving on the waves from the shadow of the high land, the dark-blue swells cresting up all round against a bank of cloud on the horizon, and the long *send* of the sea to be felt once more under you—the moon rising out of the river, while a fresh breeze blew in the offing, and promised to get a good deal stronger.

"The schooner soon hove to, and before we could have beaten up to her, being to leeward, we saw one boat after another dropped astern or off the side, till the whole five could be made out pulling for the ship; but the minute after they were alongside, she filled away again, standing almost right before the breeze up to north-westward.

"Well, you can fancy the confusion on board of us for a short time, what with questions and explainings, and what with seeing worthy old Rollock again, Ford, Winterton, the Brigadier, and Mrs Brady, after being parted for a number of days in such a way. The young lady Miss Fortescue's meeting with her mother was touching enough to witness, though of course the gentleman had got it all over before; and in fact they seemed to have made pretty merry aboard the French craft, while we were fighting for fair life with those infernal Congo savages. The dead blacks on deck and below had been thrown overboard already, and the Indianan crowding sail on her course; but I saw the judge for a minute before the round-house door was shut, with his daughter sobbing on his neck; and as soon as the rest met below in the cuddy, a scene was to be found there which one doesn't easily forget—the steward lying in one doorway, dead,

with his head smashed by a club; the missionary under the table, still bleeding, though he was alive, and not very much hurt after all. Neither he nor Macleod could tell very well how the thing happened, plain as it was now to me; but the strangest part of it to see, horrid as it seemed at first, was the body of Captain Williamson. His cot had been knocked to the deck, some of the devilish wretches had given his forehead one gash, and his breast another, each fit to kill a man. There was little or no blood, however; his face had a peaceful look on it, almost smiling, you'd have said, by comparison with the poor steward's; and as soon as his eyelids were down, the old seaman appeared to be sleeping yet. For my part, I felt as sure as if I'd seen it, that when the savages struck *that* body, they might as well have struck at the stars we had seen over the deck.

"Still, when all was cleared away, and the passengers gone tired out to their berths, I couldn't turn in without a walk on the poop beside the planter, to hear something from him—the ship all the time rising on the brisk seas, every stitch of canvas spread, the African coast beginning to drop in the moonshine, and the schooner a dim speck to north-west through the long gleam on the horizon. I found to my great surprise, there was no reason he could think of for the French craft's detaining them, except that the Brigadier had sworn at Bonaparte in the brig's cabin, or else Mrs Brady's having said she would give the world to see him just now at St Helena; in fact she would go through fire and water only to kiss the hand of such a great hero—such an enemy to all Saxons and tyrants, she vowed. But in fact they had been sitting below at the time our boat came aboard, and knew nothing about it; the French master swore to Rollock, and to the chief officer afterwards, he had mistaken *my* meaning—because I spoke bad French, no doubt; after which the gale came on, and they never saw the Indiaman again till to-night. As for their going into the river, and changing her rig, the little Frenchman said he found a brig's rig didn't suit a schooner's hull. For my part, however, I didn't see how their course for the Isle of France could be *north-west*. 'By-the-by, though,' added Rollock, 'Mrs Brady made some mystery about the whole affair. She seemed to have a few private discourses with that strange dark-faced passenger of

theirs, who, I suspect, had more to do with the vessel than he pretended. But I daresay, Collins, my boy,' said he, laughing, 'she wanted to make us think the foreigner had taken a fancy to her.'

"As we were both going below, I said, 'By-the-way, where is Mr Daniel Snout?—I haven't seen *him* yet.' 'Ah!' said the planter, turning round, 'where *is* Daniel, after all! I haven't seen him either, since we left the schooner's deck—no, by Jove! sir, he really hasn't come on board, now I think of it! I recollect we were the last boat, and he wasn't in it, although he was behind me just before I got down.' 'What can the man mean?' said I; and we both stood at the top of the hatchway ladder, looking toward the horizon, at the speck of a schooner. 'By jingo, Collins!' exclaimed the planter, chuckling, 'the Yankee is gone to be a pirate!'"

CHAPTER XIX

"**M**ORE than once that night," resumed Captain Collins, "I woke up with a start, at thought of our late adventures in the river Nouries—fancying I was still waiting for the turn of tide to bring down the boats or the schooner, and had gone to sleep, when that horrible sound through the cabin skylight seemed full in my ears again. However, the weltering wash of the water under the ship's timbers below one's head was proof enough we were well to sea; and, being dog-tired, I turned over each time with a new gusto—not to speak of the happy sort of feeling that ran all through me, I scarce knew why; though no doubt one might have dreamt plenty of delightful dreams without remembering them, more especially after such a perfect seventh heaven as I had found myself in for a moment or two, when Violet Hyde's hand first touched mine, and when I carried her in after she had actually saved my life.

"The broad daylight through our quarter-gallery window roused me at last altogether; and on starting up I saw Tom Westwood, half-dressed, shaving himself by an inch or two of broken looking-glass in regular nautical style—that's to say, watching for the rise of the ship—as she had the wind

evidently on her opposite beam, and there appeared to be pretty much of a long swell afloat, with a breeze brisk enough to make her heel to it; while the clear horizon, seen shining through the port to north-westward, over the dark-blue heave of water, showed it was far on in the morning. 'Well, Ned,' said Westwood, turning round, 'you seemed to be enjoying it, in spite of the warm work you must have had last night on board here.' Why, I thought you had been with us in the boats, after all, till I found, by the good joke the cadets made of it, that that puppy of a mate had left you still locked up, on account of some fancy he had got into his head of your being in partnership with the schooner! For heaven's sake, though, my dear fellow, wash your face and shave—you look fearfully suspicious just now!'

"'No wonder!'" said I: and I gave him an account of the matter, leaving out most of what regarded the young lady; Westwood telling me, in his turn, so much about their boat expedition as I didn't know before from the planter. Everything went to certify what I believed all along, till this sudden affair in the river. The schooner's people had plainly some cue in keeping hold of our passengers, but hadn't expected to see us so soon again, or perhaps at all—as was shown by their hailing the boats at once in a pretended friendly way, whenever they came in sight up the creek; while Ford and the rest shouted with delight, off her bulwarks, at sound of the mate's voice.

"'I tell you what, Collins,'" continued Westwood, 'this may be all very well for *you*, who are continually getting into scrapes and out of them, and don't seem to care much whether you ship on board an Indiaman or a corn-brig—you can always find something to do—but to me the service is *everything*!' 'Well, well,' said I, hastily, 'I'm much mistaken if we don't find something to do in India, Tom—only wait, and that uncle of yours will make all right; for all we know, there may be news from Europe to meet us, and I must say I don't like the notion of being born too late for turning out an admiral. I'm sure, for my part, I wish old Nap well out of that stone cage of his!' 'No, no, Ned,' said Westwood, 'I ought to clear myself at home first; and sorry I am that I gave in to you by leaving England, when I should have faced the consequences, whatever they were. Running only made matters worse,

Collins!’ ‘No doubt,’ I said; ‘and as it was my fault, why, deuce take me, Tom, if I don’t manage to carry you out scot-free! Depend on it, Captain Duncombe’s friends would have you strung up like a dog, with the interest he had and sharp as discipline is just now.’ Westwood shuddered at the thought. ‘I fear it would go hard with me, Ned,’ said he, ‘and I shan’t deny that these few weeks have brought me back a taste for life. But, in spite of all, I’d deliver myself up to the first king’s ship we speak, or go home in some Indiaman from the Cape—but for one thing, Collins!’ ‘Ah!’ said I, ‘what’s that?’ Westwood gave me a curious half-look, and said, ‘One *person* I mean, Ned—and I shouldn’t like *her* to hear of me being——’ ‘Yes, yes,’ said I, stiffly, ‘I know.’ ‘It must have been by guess, then!’ answered he. ‘Often as we’ve talked of her during the voyage, I thought you didn’t know we had met frequently in London before you came home, and—and—the fact is, I wasn’t sure you would like *me* to——’ ‘Westwood,’ said I, quickly, ‘Tom Westwood—what I have to ask is—do you love her?’ ‘If ever a man loved a woman, Ned,’ was his answer, ‘I do *her*; but if *you*——’ ‘Have you any chance, then?’ I broke out. ‘Ay, true—true enough, you have the best of chances—your way is as clear as could be, Westwood, if you knew it! Only I *must* know if she is willing—does she——’ ‘I got leave to write to her in London,’ answered Westwood, ‘and I did so pretty often, you may be sure; but I only had one short little note in answer to the last, I think it was—which I had in my breast that morning on Southsea beach, when I expected the bullet would come through it!’

“Here Westwood stooped down to his trunk, and took out a rose-coloured note wrapped in a bit of paper; I standing the while fixed to the deck, not able to speak, till he was handing it to me. ‘No, no!’ said I, turning from him angrily, and like to choke; ‘that’s too much, Mr Westwood—pray keep your own love-letters for your own reading!’ ‘There’s nothing particular in it, Ned,’ answered he, flushing a little, ‘only there’s a few words in it I’d like you to see—don’t look at it just now, but tell me afterwards what you think. You ought to see it, as the matter seems to depend on you, Ned; and if *you* object, you may be sure, so far as I’m concerned, ’tis all over!’

“Somehow or other, the look of the little folded piece of

paper, with the touch and the scent of it, as Westwood slipped it into my hand, made it stick to me. I caught one glance of the address on the back, written as if fairy fingers had done it, and I suppose I slipped it into my coat as I went out of the berth, meaning to go aloft in the foretop and sicken over the thought at my leisure, of Violet Hyde's having ever favoured another man so far, and that man Tom Westwood. The strangeness of the whole affair, as I took it, never once struck me; all that I minded was the wretched feeling I had in me, as I wished I could put the Atlantic betwixt me and them all; in fact, a hundred things before we sailed, and during the passage, seemed all at once to agree with what I'd just heard; and I'd have given thousands that moment it had been someone else than Westwood, just that I might wait the voyage out coolly, for the satisfaction of meeting him at twelve paces the first morning ashore.

"On the larboard side of the berth-gangway, opposite our door, I saw the old planter's standing half open, and Mr Rollock himself with his shirt and trousers on, taking in his boots. 'Hallo, Collins, my boy,' he sang out, eagerly, 'come here a moment, I've got something to show you!—Look,' said he, standing on tiptoe to see better through the half-port, 'there's something new been put in my picture-frame here overnight, I think—ha! ha!'

"The first thing that caught my eye, accordingly, was the gleam of a sail rising from over the swell to windward, far away off our larboard quarter, seemingly rolling before the south-easter; while the Indiaman hove her big side steadily out of water, with her head across the other's course, and gave us a sight of the strange sail swinging to the fair wind, every time we rose on the surge. 'What is it, eh?' said the planter, turning to me, 'back or face, Collins? for, bless me, if I can distinguish tub from bucket, with all this bobbing about—great deal of capital indigo wasted hereabouts, my dear fellow!' 'Why, you may make out the two breasts of her royals,' said I—'a brig, I think, sir.' 'Not that abominable schooner in her first shape again, I hope!' exclaimed he; 'perhaps bringing back the Yankee.' 'Too square-shouldered for that, Mr Rollock,' I said; 'in fact, she seems to be signalling us; yes, by Jove! there's the long pennant at her fore-royal mast-head—she's a brig of war. They're

surely asleep on deck, and we shall have a shot directly, if they don't look sharp!' 'You'd better say nothing about the Yankee's absence, Collins,' put in the planter, 'till we're fairly away. For my part, I really have no notion of waiting for anyone—particularly a fellow who *must* have some go-ahead scheme in his noddle, which we Indians don't want. Quietly speaking, my dear fellow, I shall be glad if we're rid of him!'

"On my mentioning what sort of 'notions' were found in Mr Snout's berth, and the drowning of his heathen images, the worthy planter went into perfect convulsions, till I thought I should have to slap him on the back to give him breath. 'What the deuce!' said he at last; 'Daniel must really have something worth his while to expect before he'd fail to look after such a treasure!' 'Ah,' said I, not attending to him, as I heard a stir on deck, 'there we go at last, cluing up the topsails, I suppose.' 'Seriously, now,' continued Mr Rollock, 'I can *not* fathom that vessel and her designs; but I bless my stars at getting clear off from the company of that tall Frenchman with his moustache—can't bear a moustache, Collins—always reminds me of those cursed Mahrattas that burnt my factory once. Couldn't the man shave like a Christian, I wonder? I defy you to enjoy mulligatawny soup and not make a beast of yourself, with ever so much hair over your mouth. By-the-way, Collins,' added he, eyeing me, 'since I saw you last, you've let your whiskers grow, and look more like one of your nauticals than Ford himself!—should scarce have known you! Any of it owing to the fair one up yonder, eh?' And the jolly old chap, whose own huge white whiskers gave him the cut of a royal Bengal tiger, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder towards the round-house above, with a wink of his funny round eye, that looked at you like a bird's. 'What do you suppose the Frenchman to be then, sir?' asked I, gloomily. 'Oh, either a madman, a spy, or something worse! Just guess what he asked me suddenly one morning—why, if I weren't a distinguished *savant*, and wouldn't like to study the botany of some island! "No, monsieur, not at all," replied I, in fearfully bad French. "The geology, then?" persisted he, with a curious gleam in his fierce black eyes—"does the research of monsieur lie in that direction?" "Why, no," I

answered, carelessly, "I don't care a *sacré* about stones, or anything of the kind, indeed; indigo is *my* particular line, which may be called botany, in a way—I'm perhaps prejudiced in favour of it, monsieur!" The Frenchman leant his tufted chin on his hand,' continued Mr Rollock, 'meditated a bit, then glanced at me again, as if he didn't care though I were studying seaweed in the depths of the ocean rolling round us, and stalked downstairs. Then he took to Mrs Brady again, and lastly to the Yankee, whose conversations with him, I fancy, had a twang of both commerce and politics.' 'What do you think of it all, Mr Rollock?' inquired I, rather listlessly. 'It didn't strike me at the time,' said the planter, 'but now I just ask you, Collins, if there ain't a certain great personage studying geology at present in a certain island, not very far away, I suppose, where there's plenty of it, and deuced little botany, too, I imagine?' To this question of the old gentleman's I gave nothing but a half-stupid sort of stare, thinking as I was at the same time of something else I cared more about.

"'By Jupiter! though,' cried I, on a sudden, 'instead of heaving the ship to, I do believe we've set topmast-stu'n-sails, judging from the way she pitches into the water; there's the brig nearing the wind a point or two in chase, too; why, the fellow that has charge of the deck must be mad, sir!' Next minute the fire out of one of her bow-chasers flashed out behind the blue back of a swell, and the sudden *thud* of it came rolling down to leeward over the space betwixt us, angrily, so to speak; as the brig's fore-course mounted with a wave, the sun shining clear on the seams and reef-points, till you caught sight of the anchor hanging from one bow, and the men running in her lee stun'sail-booms upon the yard-arms. The planter and I went on deck at once, where we found a fine breeze blowing, far out of sight of land, the Indiaman rushing ahead stately enough; while our young fourth officer appeared to have just woke up, and the watch were still rubbing their eyes, as if every man had been 'caulking it,' after last night's work. Even Mr Finch, when he came hastily up, seemed rather doubtful what to do, till the salt old third-mate assured him the brig was a British sloop-of-war, as anyone accustomed to reckoning sticks and canvas at sea could tell by this time; upon which our topsails

were clued up, stu'nsails boom-ended, and the ship hove into the wind to wait for the brig.

"When the brig's mainyard swung aback within fifty fathoms of our weather-quarter, hailing us as she brought to, I had plenty to think of, for my part. There she was, as square-countered and flat-breasted a ten-gun model as ever ran her nose under salt water, or turned the turtle in a Bahama squall; though pleasant enough she looked, dipping as we rose, and prancing up opposite us again with a curtsy, the brine dripping from her bright copper sheathing, the epaulets and gold bands glancing above her black bulwarks, topped by the white hammock-cloth; marines in her waist, the men clustering forward to see us, and squinting sharp up at our top-hamper. It made one ashamed, to take in the taut, lightsome set her spars had, tall and white, with a rake in them, and every rope running clean to its place; not a spot about her, hull or rig, but all English and ship-shape, to the very gather of her courses and topgallant-sails in the lines, and the snowy hollow her two broad topsails made for the wind, as they brought it in betwixt them to keep her steady on the spot.

"His Britannic Majesty's sloop *Podargus*!' came back in exchange for our mate's answer; and though 'twas curious to me to think of meeting the uniform again in five minutes, I saw plainly this was one of the nice points that Westwood and I might have to weather. Your brig-cruisers are the very sharpest fellows alive, so far as regards boarding a merchant craft; if they find the least smell of a rat, they'll overhaul your hold to the very dunnage about the keelson; and I knew that, if they made out Westwood, they'd be sure to have me too; so you may fancy that, during the short time her boat took to drop and pull under our quarter, I was making up my mind as to the course. In fact, I was almost resolved to leave the ship at any rate, feeling as I did after what I'd heard; but while most of the passengers were running about and calling below for their shoes and what not, the judge and his daughter came out of the round-house, and I caught a single glance from her for a moment, as she turned to look at the brig, that held me at the instant like an anchor in a strong tideway.

"I kept my breath as the lieutenant's hand laid hold of

the man-rope at the head of the side-ladder, expecting his first question; while he swung himself actively on deck, looking round for a second, and followed by another; the wide-awake looking young midddy in the boat folding his arms, and squinting up sideways at the ladies with an air as knowing as if he'd lived fifty years in the world, instead of perhaps thirteen.

"The younger of the lieutenants took off his cap most politely, eyeing the fair passengers with as much respect as he gave cool indifference to the cadets; the other, who was a careful-like working first-luff, said directly to Mr Finch, 'Well, sir, you seem inclined to lead us a bit of a chase; but I don't think,' added he, smiling from the Indiaman to the brig, 'you'd have cost us much trouble after all!' Here Finch hurried out his explanation, in a half-sulky way, when the naval man cut him short by saying that 'Captain Wallis desired to know' if we had touched at St Helena. 'May I ask, sir,' went on the officer, finding we had preferred the Cape, 'if *you* command this vessel—or is the master not on deck—Captain—Captain Wilson, I think you said?' The mate said something in a lower voice, and the lieutenant bared his head more respectfully than before, seeing the Company's ensign, which had been lowered half-apeak while the boat was under our side; after which Finch drew him to the capstan, telling him, as I guessed, the whole affair of the schooner, by way of a great exploit, with hints of her being a pirate or such-like.

"The brig's officer, however, was evidently too busy a man, and seemingly in too great a hurry to get back, for listening much to such a rigmarole, as he no doubt thought it; they had been at the Cape, and were bound for St Helena again where she was one of the cruisers on guard; so that what with Finch's story, and what with the crowd round the second lieutenant, all anxious to get the news, I saw it wouldn't cost Westwood and me great pains to keep clear of notice.

"There were some riots in London, and three men hanged for a horrid murder, the Duke of Northumberland's death, not to speak of a child born with two heads, or something—all since we left England. Then there was Lord Exmouth come home from Algiers; and Fort Hattrass, I think it was,

taken in India, which made every cadet prick up his ears; Admiral Plampin was arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, too, in the *Conqueror*, seventy-four, and on his way steering for St Helena, to take Sir Pulteney Malcolm's place. All of a sudden, I heard the young luff begin to mention a captain of a frigate's having been shot two months ago, by his own first lieutenant, on Southsea beach, and the lieutenant being supposed to have gone off in some outward-bound ship. 'By-the-by,' said the officer to Mr Rollock, 'you must have left about that time—did you touch at Portsmouth?' 'Why, yes,' answered the planter, 'we did. What were the parties' names?' I edged over to Westwood near the head of the companion, and whispered to him to go below to our berth, in case of their happening to attend to us more particularly; and the farther apart we two kept the better, I thought. The officer at once gave Captain Duncombe's name, but didn't remember the other; on which he turned to his first lieutenant with, 'I say, Mr Aldridge, d'you recollect the man's name that shot the captain of the *N'Oreste*, as they called her?' 'What, that bad business?' said the other; 'no, Mr Moore, I really don't—I hope he's far enough off by this time!' My breath came again at this, for it had just come into my mind that Finch, who was close by, had got hold of the name, although he fancied it mine.

"I was sauntering down the stair, thinking how much may hang at times on a man's good memory, when I heard the first lieutenant say, 'By-the-by, though, now I recollect, wasn't it Westwood?' 'Yes, yes, Westwood it was!' said the other. Then came an exclamation from Finch, and shortly after he and the first lieutenant stepped down together, talking privately of the matter, I suppose, to the cuddy, where I had gone myself. The lieutenant looked up at me seriously once or twice, then went on deck, and a few minutes afterwards the brig's boat was pulling towards her again, while the passengers flocked below to breakfast. I saw the thing was settled; the mate could scarcely keep in his triumph, as he eyed me betwixt surprise and dislike, though rather more respectfully than before. As for Westwood, he sat down with the rest, quite ignorant of what had turned up; notwithstanding he threw an uneasy look or two through the cuddy port at the brig, still curveting to wind-

ward of us, with her main-yard aback ; for my part, I made up my mind, in the meanwhile, to bear the brunt of it.

"'Twas no matter to me *now* where I went ; whereas, with Westwood, it was but a toss-up betwixt a rope and a prison, if they sent him back to England. No fear of *my* being tried in his place, of course ; but if there had been, why, to get away both from him and *her*, I'd have to run the chance ! There was a bitter sort of a pleasure, even, in the thought of taking oneself out of the way—to some purpose, too, if I saved a fellow like my old schoolmate from a court-martial sentence, and a man far worthier to win the heart of such a creature than myself : while the worst of it was, I was afraid I'd have come to hate Tom Westwood if we had stayed near each other much longer.

"Accordingly, I no sooner heard the dip of the gig's oars coming alongside again, than one of the stewards brought me a quiet message from Mr Finch, that he wanted to see me on deck ; upon which I rose off my chair just as quietly, and walked up the companion. The fact was—as the fellow could scarce have ventured to look his passengers in the face again after a low piece of work like this—'twas his cue to keep all underhand, and probably lay it to the score of my actions aboard, or something ; however, he couldn't throw any dust of the kind in the second lieutenant's eyes, who gave him a cold glance as he stepped on deck, and, picking me out at once where I stood, inquired if I were the person. The first mate nodded, whereupon the brig's officer walked towards me, with a gentlemanly enough bow, and, 'I regret to have to state, sir,' said he, 'that Captain Wallis desires to see you, *particularly*, aboard the brig.' 'Indeed, sir,' answered I, showing very little surprise, I daresay, gloomy as I felt ; 'then the sooner the better, I suppose.' 'Why, yes,' said the lieutenant, seemingly confused lest he should meet my eye, 'we're anxious to make use of this breeze, you—you know, sir.' 'Hadn't Mr Collins—this gentleman—better take his traps with him, Lieutenant Moore?' said Finch, free and easy wise. 'No, sir,' said the young officer sternly, 'we can spare time to send for them, if necessary ; of course you will keep the Indiaman in the wind, sir, till the brig squares her mainyard.' I gave Finch a single look of sheer contempt, and swung myself down by the man-ropes from the gangway

into the boat ; the lieutenant followed me, and next minute we were pulling for the brig's quarter. The moment I found myself out of the *Seringapatam*, however, my heart nigh-hand failed me, more especially at sight of the quarter-gallery window I had seen the light from, on the smooth of the swell, that first night we got to sea. I even began to think if there weren't some way of passing myself clear off, without hauling in Westwood ; but it wouldn't do. Before I well knew, we were on board, and the lieutenant showing me down the after-hatchway to the captain's cabin.

CHAPTER XX

"THE captain was sitting with one foot upon the carronade in his outer-cabin, looking through the port at the heavy Indiaman, as she slued about and plunged in the blue surge, with all sorts of ugly ropes hanging from her bows, dirty pairs of trousers towing clear of the water when she lifted, and rusty stains at her hawse-holes. A stout-built, hard-featured man he was, with bushy black eyebrows, and grizzled black hair and whiskers, not to speak of a queer, anxious, uneasy look in the keen of his eyes when he turned to me. However, he got half up on my coming in, and I saw he was lame a little of one foot, while he overhauled me all over with his eye. 'I'm sorry to have to send for you in this way, sir,' said he, rather surprised at my rig, apparently—'very sorry, sir, and no more about it ; but I can't help it, confound me—*must* do my duty.' 'Certainly, sir,' I said. 'In fact,' said Captain Wallis, 'the Admiral ordered us to see after you—*him*, that's to say—at the Cape, you know.' 'Ay, ay, sir,' said I, watching the Indiaman's poop-nettings through the port over his head, as he sat down. 'Pooh, pooh,' continued he, 'you can't be the man—just say you don't belong to the service—confound it, I'll pass you!' 'Why, sir,' said I, 'I can't exactly say *that*.' 'I hear you're Westwood of the *Orestes*, though,' said he ; 'now I don't ask you to say *no*, sir ; but everybody knew the *Orestes*, and I don't like the thing, I must say : so perhaps you're able to swear *he* is not aboard the Indiaman—just now, you know, sir—*just now*, eh?'

"This tack of his rather dumfounded me, seeing the captain of the brig meant it well; but deuced unlucky kindness it was, since I couldn't swear to the very thing he fancied so safe, and his glance was as quick as lightning, so he caught the sense of my blank look in a moment—as I fancied, at least. 'The fact is, sir,' added he, 'the surgeon told me just now he knows Lieutenant Westwood well enough by sight so they locked him up! You see we could have made you out at any rate, sir—however, we'll let the doctor stay till we're clear of the Indiaman, I think.' 'Then you take me for the gentleman you speak of, Captain Wallis?' asked I, faintly; for at the same moment I could see a light-coloured dress and a white ribbon fluttering on the *Seringapatam's* poop, the look of which sent the blood about my heart. 'Twas hard to settle betwixt a feeling of the kind, and fear for Westwood; it struck me Captain Wallis wasn't very eager in the affair, and 'twas on my lips to assure him I wasn't the man. 'Hark'ee,' broke in he, with almost a wink, and a smile ready to break out on his mouth, 'the short and the long of it is, I'll take *you*! We must have somebody to show in the case; though now I remember, there was someone else said to've gone off with you—but we won't trouble *him*! If we've brought away the wrong man, why, hang it, so much the better! If you're Westwood, I can tell you, they'll run ye up to a yardarm, sir! Much more comfortable than ten years or so in a jail, too, as—as no one knows better than *I* do myself.'

"Here the captain's face darkened, his eye gleamed, and he rose with a limp to ring a hand-bell on the table. 'White,' said he to the marine that put his head in at the door, with his hand up to it, 'desire the first lieutenant, from me, to send a boat aboard for this gentleman's things.' 'I'm afraid, sir,' continued he gravely to me, 'you'll have to reckon yourself under arrest—but you'll find the gentlemen in the gun-room good company, I hope, for a day or two, till we make St Helena.' I saw the captain's mind was made up, and for the life of me I didn't know what to say against it; but speak I could not, so with a stiff bow and a sick sort of a smile I turned out of the door, and walked along to the gun-room, which was empty. I could see the boat soon after under the ship's side, dipping and rising as they handed down my couple of portmanteaus to the man-o'-war's men; the young

reefer came down again as nimble as a monkey, with some letters in his hand, took off his cap to some ladies above, and sang out to give way ; five or six flashing feathers of the oars in the sunlight, and they were coming round the brig's stern.

"The brig was just squaring away her main-yard at the whistle from the boatswain's mates, when the whole run of the Indiaman's bulwarks was crowded with the passengers' and men's faces, watching the brig gather way to pass ahead ; I could hear the officers on deck hail the India mates, wishing them a good voyage, the ladies bowing and waving their handkerchiefs to the British Union-Jack. Some sort of confusion seemed to get up, however, about the ship's taffrail, where Rollock, Ford, and some others were standing together ; the planter jumped up all at once on the quarter-mouldings nearest the brig, then jumped down again, and his straw hat could be seen hurrying towards the quarterdeck.

"Next I caught a bright glimpse of Violet Hyde's face, as the sun shot on it free of the awnings—her eyes wandering with the brig's motion, I fancied, along the deck above me, till suddenly she seemed to start, and Westwood appeared behind her. The next thing I saw was the black-faced figure-head of the *Seringapatam* rising below her bowsprit, about sixty yards from the gun-room port where I was, and down she went again with a heavy splash, as Tom Westwood himself leapt up between the knight-heads at the bow, hailing the brig's deck with a voice like a trumpet. 'Ahoy! the *Podargus* ahoy! For mercy's sake, heave to again, sir!' he sung out. 'I'm the man you want!' 'The Indiaman ahoy!' I heard Captain Wallis himself hail back. 'What d'ye say?' The creak of our yards, with the flap of the jib, and the men's feet, drowned Westwood's second hail, as it came sharp up to windward ; the sailors in the Indiaman's bows were grinning at him behind, while the first lieutenant of the brig shouted gruffly that she had no time to wait for more letters ; and I heard the gun-room steward say to the marine, on going out with the dirty breakfast-cloth, he wondered if 'that parson cove thought the *Pedarkis* wanted a chapling,' or was only 'vun of these fellers that's so troublesome to see the French Hemperor.'

"'Well,' said the marine, 'twas pretty queer if he took

the *Pedarkis* for the ship to carry him there. I don't think the captain would let a rat into the island if he could help it.' 'Not he,' said the steward; 'plenty on 'em in already, Vite, my man—I do think they used to swim off on board here, by the way our cheese vent.' All this time I never stirred from the port, watching with my chin on the muzzle of the gun till the Indiaman was half-a-mile to windward of us, her big hull still rising and falling on the same swells, topped with clusters of heads; her topsails lowered in honour of the flag, the ensign blowing out half-mast high for the death of Captain Williamson; a long wash of the water ran outside the brig's timbers, surge after surge, and the plunge at her bows showed how fast she began to run nor'-westward before the wind. You may well fancy my state, after all I'd done for weeks; in fact, one scarce knew the extent of what he'd felt, what he'd looked forward to, till he found himself fairly adrift from it; 'twould even have been nothing, after all, could I just have thought of Violet Hyde as I'd done two hours ago, on waking with last night in the river on my mind.

"As it was, 'twould have taken little to make me jump out of the port into the sweep of blue water swelling toward the brig's counter; the *Seringapatam* being by this time astern. I couldn't even see her, or aught save the horizon, to windward; but at this moment the young second lieutenant came below, and, seeing me, he began in a polite enough way, with a kindly manner about it, trying to raise my spirits. 'I suppose, sir,' said I, rather sulkily I daresay, 'I can have a berth just now?' 'Oh, certainly,' said he, 'the steward has orders to see to it at once. Will you come on deck a minute or two in the meantime, sir?'

"I looked back from the ship astern to the brig-of-war's clean white decks, flush fore and aft, with the men all forward at their stations, neatly dressed in regular man-o'-war style, everyone alike—a sight that would have done me good at another time, small as she was by comparison; but the very thought of the Indiaman's lumbering poop and galleries was too much for me—'twas as if you'd knocked out those two round-house doors of hers, and let in a gush of bare sky instead. The ship-shape man-o'-war cut of things was nothing, I fancied, to the snug spot under those top-gallant bulwarks of hers, and the breezy poop all a-flutter with muslin of

an evening, where you found books and little basket affairs stuck into the coils of rope. I thought the old *Seringapatam* never looked so well, as she commenced trimming sail on a wind, beginning to go drive ahead, with a white foam at her bows, and her whole length broadside-on to us. All at once we saw her clue up courses and to'-gallant sails, till she was standing slowly off under the three top-sails and jib; the two lieutenants couldn't understand what she was about, and the captain put the glass to his eye, after which he said something to the second lieutenant, who went forward directly.

"The next thing I saw was the Indiaman coming up in the wind again for about a minute; she had her stern nearly to us, when the moment after, as she rose upon a long sea, you saw something flash white off her lee gangway in the sunlight, that dropped against it into the hollow of a wave. The next minute she fell off again with her topsails full, and the first shower of spray was rising across her forefoot, when the flash of a gun broke out of her side, and the sound came down to us; then a second and a third. The brig gave her the same number in answer, and as soon as the smoke betwixt us had cleared away, the ship could be seen under full sail to the south-westward by west. '*That's her poor skipper's hammock dropped alongside, gentlemen,*' said Captain Wallis to his officers; '*God be with him.*' '*Amen,*' said the first lieutenant, and we put our caps on again. '*Set stu'nsails, Mr Aldridge,*' said the captain, limping down the hatchway; as for me, I leant I don't know how long over the brig's taffrail, watching the ship's canvas grow in one, through the width of air betwixt us; my heart full, as may be supposed, not to say what notions came into my head of what might happen to her under Finch's charge, ere she reached Bombay. No one belonging to the brig spoke to me, out of kindness, no doubt; and the ship was hull-down on the horizon, to my fancy with somewhat of a figure like *hers*, when she stood with the cashmere shawl over her head in the dusk. Then I went gloomily down to my berth, where I kept close by myself till I fell asleep, though the gun-room steward was sent to me more than once to join the officers.

"It wasn't till the next day, in fact, when I went on the quarterdeck at noon, wearied for a fresher gulp of air, that I saw any of them; and the breeze having fallen lighter that

morning, they were too busy trimming sail and humouring her to give me much notice. I must say I had seldom seen a commander seem more impatient about the sailing of his craft, in time of peace, than the captain of the *Podargus* appeared to be; walking the starboard side as fast as the halt in his gait would let him, and the anxious turn of his eyes plainer than before, while he looked from the brig's spread of stu'n sails to the horizon, through the glass, which, I may say, he never once laid down. From where the brig spoke the Indiaman, to St Helena, would be about two or three days' sail with a fair wind, at the ordinary strength of the south-east trade; though, at this rate, it might cost us twice the time. I noticed the men on the forecastle look to each other now and then knowingly, at some fresh sign of the captain's impatience; and the second lieutenant told me in a low voice, with his head over the side near mine, Captain Wallis had been out of sorts ever since they lost sight of the island. 'You'd suppose, sir,' said he, laughing, 'that old *Nap* was his sweetheart, by the way he watches over him; and now, I fancy, he's afraid St Helena may be sunk in blue water while we were away! In fact, Mr Westwood,' added he, 'it looks devilish like as if it had come up from Davy Jones, all standing; so I don't see why it shouldn't go down to him again some day; I can tell you it's tiresome work cruising to windward there, though, and we aren't idle at all!'

"'Did you ever see the French Emperor yourself, sir?' asked I—for I must say the thought of nearing the prison such a man was in made me a little curious. 'Never, sir, except at a mile's distance,' said the second lieutenant; 'indeed, it's hard to get a pass, unless you know the governor. But I've a notion,' continued he, 'the governor's carefulness is nothing to our skipper's! Indeed, they tell a queer story of how Sir Hudson Lowe was gulled for months together, when he was governor of Capri island, in the Mediterranean. As for the captain, again, you'd seek a long time ere you found a better seaman—he's as wide awake, too, as Nelson himself; while the curious thing is, I believe, he never once clapped eyes on Bonaparte in his life! But good cause he has to hate him, you know, Mr Westwood!' 'Indeed,' said I, taking a moment's interest in the thing; and I was just going to ask the reason, when the first lieutenant came over to say

Captain Wallis would be glad if I would dine with him in the cabin.

"At dinner-time, accordingly, I put on a coat, for the first time, less like those the cadets in the *Seringapatam* wore, and went aft, where I found the first lieutenant and a midshipman with the captain. He did his best to soften my case, as I saw by his whole manner during dinner; after which, no sooner had the reefer had his one glass of wine, than he was sent on deck to look out to windward. 'Well, sir,' said Captain Wallis thereupon, turning from his first luff to me, 'I'm sorry for this disagreeable business! I believe you deny being the person at all, though?' 'Why, sir,' said I, 'I am certainly no more the first lieutenant of the *Orestes* than yourself, Captain Wallis! 'Twas all owing to a mistake of that India mate, who owed me a grudge.' 'Oh, oh, I see!' replied he, beginning to smile, 'the whole matter's as plain as a handspike, Mr Aldridge! But I couldn't do less, on the information.' 'However, sir,' put in the first lieutenant, 'there's no doubt the real man must have been in the ship, or the mistake could not have happened, sir!' 'Well—you look at things too square, Aldridge,' said the captain. 'All *you*'ve got to do, I hope, sir, is just to prove you're not Westwood; and if you want still to go out to the East Indies, why, I daresay you won't be long of finding some outward-bound ship or other off Jamestown. Only, I'd advise you, sir, to have your case over with Sir Pulteney, before Admiral Plampin comes in—as I fear he would send you to England.' 'It matters little to me, sir,' I answered; 'seeing the reason I had for going out happens to be done with.' Here I couldn't help the blood rising in my face; while Captain Wallis's steady eye turned off me, and I heard him say in a lower key to the lieutenant, he didn't think it was a matter for a court-martial at all. 'Pooh, Aldridge!' said he, 'some pretty girl amongst the passengers in the case, I wager!' 'Why,' returned Aldridge, carelessly, 'I heard Mr Moore say some of the ladies were pretty enough, especially one—some India judge or other's young daughter—I believe he was in raptures about, sir.' This sort of thing, as you may suppose, was like touching one on the raw with a marling-spike; when the captain asked me—partly to smooch it over, maybe—'By-the-by, sir, Mr Aldridge tells me there was something about a pirate schooner, or slaver, or some

craft of the kind, that frightened your mates—that's all stuff, I daresay—but what I want to know is, in what quarter you lost sight of her, if you recollect?' 'About nor'-west by north from where we were at the time, sir,' said I. 'A fast-looking craft was she?' asked he. 'A thorough-built smooth-going clipper, if ever there was one,' I said. At this the captain mused for a little, till at last he said to his lieutenant: 'They daren't risk it; I don't think there's the Frenchman born, man enough to try such a thing by water, Aldridge?' 'Help *him* out, you mean, sir?' said the luff; 'why, if he ever got as far as the water's edge, I'd believe in witchcraft, sir!' 'Give a man time, Mr Aldridge,' answered the captain, 'and he'll get out of anything where soldiers are concerned—every year he's boxed up sharpens him till his very mind turns like a knife, man! It makes one mad on every point besides, I tell you, sir—whereas after he's free, perhaps, it's just on *that only* his brain has a twist in it!' 'No doubt, Captain Wallis,' said Aldridge, glancing over to me, as his commander got up and began walking about the cabin, spite of his halt. 'D'ye know,' continued he, 'I've thought at times what I should like best would be to have *him* ahead of the brig, in some craft or other, and we hard in chase—I'd go after that man to the North Pole, sir, and bring him back! Without once going aboard to know he was there, I'd send word it was Jack Wallis had him in tow!' 'What is Bonaparte like, then, after all, sir?' I asked, just to fill up the break. 'I never saw him, nor he me,' replied Captain Wallis, stopping in his walk; 'but every day he may have a sight of the brig cruising to windward; and as for the island, we see plenty of *it*, I think, Aldridge?' 'Ay, ay, sir,' said Aldridge, 'that we do! For my part, I can't get the ugly stone steeples of it out of my head!' 'Well,' continued the captain, 'at times, when we're beating round St Helena of a night, I'll be hanged if I haven't thought it began to loom as if the French Emperor stood on the top of it, like a shadow looking out to sea the other way—and I've gone below lest he'd turn round till I saw his face. I've a notion Mr Aldridge, if I once saw his face, I'd lose what I feel against him, just as I used always to fancy, the first five years in the *Temple*, if he were only to see *me*, he would let me out! But they say he's got a wonderful way of coming over everyone,

if he likes!’ After this, Captain Wallis sat down and passed the decanters, the first lieutenant observing, he supposed Bonaparte was a great man in his way, but nothing to Nelson. ‘Don’t tack them together, Aldridge!’ said his commander quickly; ‘Nelson was a man all over, he’d got the feelings of a man and his faults; but I call *him*, yonder, a perfect demon let loose upon the world! To my mind all the blood those republicans shed, with their murdered king’s at bottom of it, got somehow into him, till he thought no more of human beings, or aught concerning ’em, than I do of so many cockroaches! But the terrible thing was, sir, his infernal schemes, and his cunning: why, he’d twist you one country against another, and get hold of both, like a man bending stu’n sail halliards; there were men grew up round him quick as mushrooms, fit to carry out everything he wanted; so one couldn’t wonder at him enough, Mr Aldridge, if it was only natural! I can’t tell you anything like what I felt,’ he went on, ‘when I was in Sir Sydney Smith’s ship, cruising down Channel, and we used to see the gun-boats and flat-bottoms he got together for crossing the straits; or one night with poor Captain Wright, that we stood in near enough to get a shot sent at us off the heights—the whole shore about Boulogne was one twinkle of lights and camp-fires, and you heard the sound of the hammers on planks and iron, with the carts and gun-carriages creaking—not to speak of a hum from soldiers enough, you’d have thought, to eat Old England up! And where are they now?’ ‘I don’t know, sir, indeed,’ said the first lieutenant gravely, supposing by the captain’s look, no doubt, that it was a question. ‘What, Captain Wallis!’ exclaimed I, ‘were you with Captain Wright, then, sir?’ Of course, like everyone in the service, I had heard Captain Wright’s story often, with ever so many versions; there was a mystery about his sad fate that made me curious to hear more of what gave the whole navy, I may say, a hatred to Bonaparte not at all the same you regard a fair enemy with.

“‘*With him*, say you, sir?’ repeated the captain of the *Podargus*, ‘ay was I! I was his first lieutenant, and good cause I had to feel for the end he came to, as I’ll let you hear. One night Captain Wright went ashore, as he’d often done, into the town of Beville, dressed like a smuggler; for

the fact was the French winked at smuggling, only I must say *we* used to land men instead of goods. I didn't like the thing that night, and advised him not to go, as they'd begun to suspect something of late! However, the captain by that time was foolhardy, owing to having run so many risks, and he was bent on going in before we left the coast; though, after all, I believe it was only to get a letter that any fisherman could have brought off. The boat was lying off and on behind a rocky point, and we waited and waited, hearing nothing but the sound of the tide making about the big weedy stones, in the shadow from the lights of the town; when at last the French landlord of the little tavern he put up at came down upon the shingle and whistled to us. He gave me a message from Captain Wright, with the private word we had between us, saying he wanted me to come up to the town on a particular business. Accordingly I told the men to shove out again, and away I went with the fellow.

"No sooner did I open the door of the room, however, than three or four gendarmes had hold of me, and I was a prisoner: as for Captain Wright, I never saw him more. The morning broke as they brought me up on horseback in the middle of them, along the road to Paris, from whence I could make out the cutter heeling to the breeze a mile or two off the land, with two or three gunboats hard in chase.

"Well, sir, at Paris they clapped me into a long gloomy-like piece of masonwork called the *Temple*, close alongside of the river, where plenty of our countrymen were; Captain Wright and Sir Sydney Smith himself among the rest, as I found out afterwards. The treatment wasn't so bad at first; but when you climbed up to the windows, there was nothing to be seen but the top of a wall and roofs of houses all round, save where you'd a glimpse of the dirty river and some pig-trough of a boat. One day I got a letter from Captain Wright—how they let me have it I don't well know—saying he was allowed a good deal of comfort in the meantime, but he suspected some devilish scheme in it, to make him betray the British Government, or something of the kind; that he'd heard one of the French royalist generals had choked himself in his prison, but never to believe he'd do the same thing, though every night he woke up thinking he heard the key

turn in the door. The next thing I heard of was that Captain Wright had made away with himself, sir !'

"Here Captain Wallis got up again, walking across the cabin, seemingly much moved. 'Well, after that I slept with the dinner-knife in my breast, till the jailer took it away ; for I thought at the time that poor Wright had been murdered, though I found cause to change my mind when I knew what loneliness does with a man, not to speak of the notion being put before him to take his own life. For a while, too, Captain Shaw was in the same cell ; by which time we had such bad food, and so little of it, that one day when a pigeon lighted on the window, which used to come there for a crumb or two every afternoon, right along with the gold gleam of the sun as it shot over the dark houses to that window, I jumped up and caught it. Shaw and I actually tore it in bits, and ate it raw on the spot ; though 'twas long ere I could get rid of the notion of the poor bird fluttering and cooing against the bars, and looking at me with its round little soft eye as it pecked off the slab. But what was that to the thought of my old father that had hurt himself to keep me in the navy, and me able now to make his last days comfortable ? or the innocent young girl I had married the moment I got my commission of first lieutenant, expecting to be flush of prize-money ? It even came into my head often, when I sat by myself in the cell they afterwards put me into, alone, how that little blue pigeon might have carried a letter to England for me ; at any rate it was the only thing like a chance, or a friend, I ever saw the whole time I was there ; and foolish as the notion may look, why the window was too high in a smooth wall for me once to reach it.

"'I heard all Paris humming round the thick of the stone every day, and sometimes the sound of thousands of soldiers tramping past below, over the next bridge, with music and such like—no doubt when the First Consul, as they called him, went off to some campaign or other : then I'd dream I felt the deck under me in a fresh breeze at night, till the soul sickened in me to wake up and find the stones as still as before, and now and then hear the sentries challenging on their rounds.

"'Well, one day, a fellow in a cloak, with a slouch hat over his forehead, was let in to try, as I thought, if there

was anything to be got out of me, as they tried two or three times at first; some spy he was, belonging to that police devil Fouché. What did he offer me, d'ye think, after beating about the bush for half-an-hour, but the command of a French seventy-four under the Emperor, as he was by that time, and, if I would take it, I was free! On this I pretended to be thinking of it, when the police fellow sidled near me, to show a commission signed with the Emperor's name at the foot.

“In place of taking hold of it, however, I jumped up and seized the villain's nose and chin before he saw my purpose, stuffed the parchment into his mouth by way of a gag, and made him dance round the cell, with his cloak over his head and his sword dangling alongside of him, to keep his stern clear of my foot; till the turnkey heard the noise, and he made bolt out as soon as the door was opened. You'd wonder how long that small matter served me to laugh over, for my spirit wasn't broken yet, you see; but even then, in the very midst of it, I would all of a sudden turn sick at heart, and sit wondering when the exchange of prisoners would be made that I looked for. The worst of it was, at times a horrid notion would come into my head of the French seventy-four being at sea at the moment, and me almost wishing they'd give me the offer over again—I fancied I felt the very creak of her straining in the trough of a sea, and saw the canvas of her topsails over me, standing on her poop with a glass in my hand, till she rose on a crest, and there were the *Agamemnon's* lighted ports bearing down to leeward upon us, till I heard Nelson's terrible voice sing out, “Give it to 'em, my lads!” when the flash of her broadside showed me his white face under the cocked hat, and it came whizzing over like a thirty-two-pound shot right into my breast, as I sunk to the bottom, and found myself awake in the prison.

“I don't know how long it was after, but they moved me to another berth, where a man had shot himself through the head, for we actually met his body being carried along the passage; and more than that, sir, they hadn't taken the trouble to wash his brains off the wall they were scattered on. There I sat one day after another, watching the spot marked by them turn dry, guessing at everything that had gone through them as long as he was alive in the place, till

my own got perfectly stupid; I was as helpless as a child, and used to cry at other times when the jailer didn't bring me my food in time. I fancied they'd forget all about me in England; and as for time, I never counted it, except by the notion I had been two or three years in.

"At last the turnkey got so used to me, thinking me no doubt such a harmless sort of a poor man, that he would sit by and talk to me, giving accounts of the Emperor's battles and victories, and such matters. I must say I began to feel as if he was some sort of a god upon earth there was no use to strive against, just as the turnkey seemed to do, more especially when I heard of Nelson's death; so when he told me one time it wouldn't do for Fouché or the Emperor to let me out yet, I said nothing more. "Will the Emperor not let me out *now*?" asked I, a long time after. "*Diable!*" said the man, "do you think His Majesty has time to think of such a poor fellow as you, among such great matters? No, no, *pauvre homme!*" continued he; "you're comfortable here, and wouldn't know what to do if you were out! No fear of your doing as your Capitaine *Ourite* did, since you've lived here so long, monsieur." "How long is it now, good Pierre?" asked I, with a sigh, as he was going out at the door; and the turnkey counted on his fingers. "Ulm—Austerlitz—Jena," said he slowly; "*oui, oui*—I scarcely thought it so much—it wants only six or seven months of ten years!" and he shut to the door. I sprang up off the bed I was sitting on, wild at the thought—I may say, for a day or two I was mad—ten years! ten years!—and all this time where was my poor innocent Mary, and the child she expected to bear when I left Exeter—where was my old father? But I couldn't bear to dwell on it. Yes, Aldridge, by the God above, they had kept me actually *ten years* there, in that cursed Temple while *he* was going on all the time with his victories, and his shows, and his high-flown bulletins! Yet he wasn't too high, it seems, to stoop to give out, through his tools, how Wright and I had both killed ourselves for fear of bringing in the British Government—not to offer me a seventy-four in a dungeon—*me*, a man used to wind and water, that loved a breeze at sea like life. 'Twas the very devil's temptation, sir; but I'll tell you what, both Captain Wright and myself had been with Sir Sidney Smith at Acre, when *he* was baffled for the first time in his days—that

was the thing, I believe from my soul, that he hated us for. I had a right to be exchanged ten times over, though he might have called Wright a spy; but what was my poor wife and her new-born baby, or my old father's gray hairs to *him*, and his great ambition to make everything his own—and when the very thought of me in my hole at the Temple would strike him in the midst of his victories, where he hadn't time, forsooth, to trouble himself about a poor man like me. The fact was, I could tell how he offered a British seaman, that had had a finger in nettling him, the command of one of his seventy-fours, which he had nobody fit to manage—and that in a prison where I'd be glad even of fresh air.

“‘Twas then, in fact, the purpose rose firmer and firmer in me, out of the fury that was like to drive me mad, how I'd get out of his clutches, and spend my life against the very pitch of his power I knew so well about. Till that time I used to look through the bars of the window at the Seine, without ever fancying escape, low down as it was, compared with my last cell. There was a mark in the stone floor with my walking back and forward since they put me in; and by this time I had the cunning of a beast, let alone its strength, in regard of anything I took into my head; often I used to think I saw the end of my finger, or the corner of a stone, more like the way a fly sees them, than a man. The turnkey, Pierre, would never let me have a knife to eat my food with, lest I should do as he said all we English were apt to do—kill myself—which, by-the-way, is a lie; and I think that fiend of an Emperor yonder must have taught them to blame us with their own crime. However, latterly he let me have a fork for half-an-hour at dinner; and for a quarter of an hour every day, except those when he stayed to talk to me as I ate it, did I climb up and work with that fork at the top and bottom of one of the window-bars, taking care not to break the fork, and jumping down always in time to finish the meal. It took me four whole months, sir, to loosen them! Such deadly fear as I was in, too, lest he'd find it out, or lest they moved me to another cell—you'd have thought I was fond of the walls round the place, where hundreds of men before me had scrawled their last words; and the one that shot himself had written, “*Liberté—ané-*
antissement!” “Liberty—annihilation!” just over where the

spatter of his brains had stuck when he laid his head to the spot! If Pierre had noticed what I'd been about, my mind was made up to kill him, and then make the trial before they missed him; but *that* I had a horror of, after all, seeing the man had taken a sort of liking to me, and I knew he had a wife.

"Well, at last, one day I had the thing finished; when midnight came I trembled like a leaf, till I began to fear I couldn't carry it through. I tore my shirt and the blanket in strips, to twist into a line, got out the bar by main force, squeezed through, and let myself down. The line was just long enough to let me swing against the cold wall, over a sentry's head going round the parapet below; as soon as he was past, I dropped on the edge of the wall, and fell along it, my fingers scraping the smooth stone to no purpose, till I was sliding off into the dark, with the river I didn't know how far below me, though I heard it lapping against some boats at the other side.

"For a few moments I was quite senseless from the fall into the water. The splash roused the sentinels, and three or four bullets whizzed into it about me, as I struck out for the shore. Still the night was thick enough to help me clear off among the dark lanes in the city; and the upshot of it was that I found out some royalists, who supplied me with a pedlar's dress; till, in the end, after I can't tell you how many ticklish chances, where my luck hung upon a hair, I reached the coast, and was taken off to a British frigate. At home, sir—at home, I found I'd been given up long ago for a dead man in Bonaparte's prisons, and—and—the old man had been buried seven years, Aldridge—but not so long as my—wife. The news of my taking my own life in the Temple saved her the rest—'twas too much for her at the time, Aldridge—both she and her little one had lain in the mould nine years, when I stood looking at the grass under Exeter Cathedral. I was a young man almost, still; but my hair was as grizzled when I got out of the Temple in 1813, as you see it now, and I'll never walk the deck fairly again. Aldridge,' added the captain of the *Podargus*, turning round and standing still, with a low sort of a deep whisper, 'tis a strange thing, the Almighty's way of working—but I never thought—in the Temple yonder, longing for a heave of the water under me—

I little thought John Wallis would ever come to keep guard over his Majesty, the Emperor Napoleon !'

"When Captain Wallis stopped, the long send of the sea lifting the brig below us, with a wild, yearning kind of ripple from her bows back to her counter, and weltering away astern—one felt it, I may say, somewhat like an answer to him, for the breeze had begun to freshen : it had got all of a sudden nearly quite dark, too, as is the case inside the tropics, without the moon. 'Let's go on deck, gentlemen,' said the captain, coming to himself; 'now clap on those other topmost stu'nails, Mr Aldridge, and make her walk, sir!'—'No saying,' I heard him mutter, as he let us go up before him—'no saying what the want of the *Podargus* might do, off the island, these dark nights—with water alongside, one can't be sure. I warrant me if *that man's* dreams came true, as mine did, he would be at the head of his thousands again, ruining the whole world, with men rotting out of sight in dungeons while the wind blows! Ay, dreams, young gentleman!' said he to me as we stood on deck; 'I'll never get rid of that prison, in my head, nor the way that dead man's brain seemed to come into mine, off the wall! But for my part, off St Helena, 'tis Napoleon Bonaparte's dreams that enter into my head. If you'll believe it, sir, I've *heard* them as it were creeping and tingling round the black heights of the island at dead of night, like men in millions ready to break out in war-music, as I used to hear them go over the bridge near the Temple—or in shrieks and groans; we all the time forging slowly ahead, and the surf breaking in at the foot of the rocks. I know then *who's* asleep at the time up in Longwood!'

"The brig-of-war was taking long sweeps and plunges before the wind; the Southern Cross right away on her larboard quarter, and the very same stars spread all out aloft, that I watched a couple of nights before, close by Violet Hyde. The whole of what I'd just heard was nothing to me in a single minute, matched with the notion of never seeing her more. Everything I'd thought of since we left England was gone, even one's heart for the service; and what to do now, I didn't know. I scarce noticed it commence to rain, till a bit of a squall had come on, and they were hauling down stu'nails: the dark swells only to be seen rising with the foam on them, and a heavier cover of dull cloud risen off the brig's

beam, as well as ahead; so that you merely saw her canvas lift before you against the thick of the sky, and dive into it again. 'Twas just cleared pretty bright off the stars astern of us, however, wind rather lighter than before the squall, when the captain thought he made out a sail near about the starboard beam, where the clouds came on the water-line; a minute or two after she was plain enough in the clear, though looming nearly end-on, so that one couldn't well know her rig. Thinking at first sight it might be the schooner, Captain Wallis was for bracing up, to stand in chase and overhaul her; but shortly after she seemed either to yaw a little, or fall off again before the wind like ourselves, at any rate showing three sticks on the horizon, with square canvas spread, and evidently a small ship.

"'Some homeward-bound craft meaning to touch at the island,' said Captain Wallis, telling the first lieutenant to keep all fast; by which time she was lost in the dusk again, and I wasn't long of going below. A fancy had got hold of me for the moment, I can't deny, of its being the *Seringapatam* after us on Westwood's owning himself; whereupon I persuaded myself Captain Wallis might perhaps take the risk on him of letting us both go. For my part, I felt by this time as if I'd rather be in the same ship with *her*, hopeless though it was, than steer this way for the other side of the line; and I went down with a chill at my heart like the air about an iceberg.

"Not being asleep, however, a sudden stir on deck, an hour or two after that, brought me out of my cot, to look through the scuttle in the side. The brig had hauled her wind from aft on to her starboard quarter, making less way than *before* it, of course; I heard the captain's voice near the after-hatchway, too; so accordingly I slipped on my clothes, and went quietly up. The *Podargus* was running through the long broad swells usual thereabouts, with her head somewhere toward north-east; the officers all up, the whole of the crew in both watches clustered beyond the brig's fore-course, and the captain evidently roused, as well as impatient; though I couldn't at first make out the reason of her being off her course. As soon as she fell off a little, however, to my great horror I could see a light far ahead of us, right in the gloom of the clouds, which for a moment you'd have supposed was

the moon rising red and bloody, till the heave of the sea betwixt us and it showed how both of us were dipping: and now and then it gave a flaring glimmer fair out from the breast of the fog-bank, while the breeze was sending a brown puff of smoke from it now and then to leeward against the clouds; through which you made a spar or two licking up the flame, and a rag of canvas fluttering across on the yard.

"'Twas neither more nor less than a ship on fire—no doubt the vessel seen abeam of us that evening—a sight at which Captain Wallis seemingly forgot his hurry to make St Helena, in the eagerness shown by all aboard to save the poor fellows. Suddenly there was another wild gleam from the burning craft, and we thought it was over altogether, when up shot a wreath of fire and smoke again, then a fierce flash with a blue burst of flame, full of sparks, and all sorts of black spots and broken things, as if she had blown up while she heaved the last time on the swell. Everything was pitch dark next minute in her place, as if a big blot of ink had come instead; the brig-of-war herself rolling with a flap of her headsails up against the long heavy bank of cloud that blocked the horizon. 'Keep her away, sirrah!' shouted Captain Wallis, and the *Podargus* surged ahead as before, all of us standing too breathless to speak, but counting the heads of the waves as they flickered past her weather-beam. 'God's sake!' exclaimed the captain at last, 'this is terrible, Aldridge. If I had only overhauled her, as I meant at first, we might have helped them in time; for no doubt the fire must have been commenced when we noticed her yawing yonder a couple of hours ago, sir.' 'I think not, sir,' said his lieutenant; '*we* were against the clear; and if they'd been in danger *then*, she'd have fired a distress-gun. There couldn't have been much powder aboard, sir—more likely rum, I think!'

"'For Heaven's sake!' continued the captain, 'let's look about—she must surely have had boats out, or something, Mr Aldridge! The best thing we can do is to fire a few times as we bear down—see that bow-gun cleared away, Mr Moore, and do it!'

"We might have been about a mile, as was guessed, from where she was last seen, when the brig fired a gun to windward, still standing on under everything. At the second flash that lighted up the belly of the clouds, with the black glitter

of the swells below them, I fancied I caught a moment's glimpse of something two or three miles away. It was too short to say, however; and soon after the twinkle of a light, seemingly hoisted on a spar, was seen little more than half-a-mile upon the brig's lee-bow, dipping and going out of sight at times, but plain enough when it rose. Down went the *Podargus* for the spot, sending the foam off her cutwater; and it was no long time before a wild hail from several voices could be made out almost close aboard. Ten minutes after she was brought to the wind, heaving a rope to the men on a loose raft of casks and spars, as it pitched alongside of her, with the sail hauled down on a spar they had stuck up, and a lantern at the head of it; after which the raft was cast off, and the poor fellows were safe on board.

"Two of them seemed to be half-drowned, the one wrapped up in a wet pilot-coat, his face looking white and frightened enough by the glimmer of the lanterns: the other darker a good deal, so far as I could make him out for the crowd about him, and he didn't seem able to speak; accordingly both of them were taken at once below to the surgeon. The rest were four half-naked blacks, and a little chap with earrings and a seaman's dress who was the spokesman on the quarterdeck to the captain's questions—plainly American by his snuffling sort of drawl.

"‘Are there no more of you afloat?’ was the first thing asked, to which the Yankee sailor shook his head. She was an American bark, he said, from a voyage of discovery round the two Capes; and he was mate himself, and the skipper, being addicted to his cups, had set a cask of rum on fire; so finding they couldn't get it under besides being wearied at the pumps, on account of an old leak, the men broke into the spirit-room, and got dead drunk. He and the blacks had patched up a raft in a hurry for bare life, barely saving the passenger and his servant who had jumped overboard; the passenger was a learned sort of a man, and his servant was a Mexican. Most of this I found next day, from the gun-room officers; however, I heard the mate of the burnt barque inquire of the captain whereabouts they were, as the skipper was the only man who could use a chronometer or quadrant, and the last gale had driven them out of their reckonings a long way. ‘Somewhere south of the Line, I guess?’ said he; but, on

being told, the fellow gave a bewildered glance round him, seemingly, and a cunning kind of squint after it, as I fancied. 'Well,' said he, 'I guess we're considerable unlucky; but I consider to turn in, if agreeable!' The man had a way, in fact, half free-and-easy, half awkward that struck me; especially when he said, as he went below, he supposed 'this was a war-brig,' and hoped there 'wasn't war between the States and the old country?' 'No, my man,' said the captain, 'you may set your mind at ease on that point; but I'm afraid, nevertheless, we'll have to land you at St Helena!'

"'What, mister?' said the American, starting, 'that's where you've got Boneyparty locked up? Well now, if you give me a good berth for a few, mister, I guess I'll rayther ship aboard you, till I get a better! What's your wage just now, if I may ask, captain?' 'Well, well,' said the captain, laughing, 'we'll see to-morrow, my man!'—and the American went below. 'Set stu'nsails again, Mr Aldridge,' continued Captain Wallis, 'and square yards. Why, rather than have such a fellow in the ship's company, Aldridge, I'd land him without Sir Hudson's leave!'

"For my own part, next day, I should have given more notice to our new shipmates while the brig steered fair before the wind—the blacks and the mate leaning about her forecastle, and the other two being expected by the surgeon to come pretty well round before night, though the captain had gone to see them below; but a thing turned up all at once that threw me once more full into the thought of Violet Hyde, till I was perfectly beside myself with the helpless case I was in. The note Tom Westwood had shown me was still in the pocket of my griffin's coat, though I hadn't observed it till now; and what did I feel at finding out, that, instead of one from her to Westwood, it was a few words from my own sister, little Jane, saying in a pretty, bashful sort of way, that her brother Ned must come home before she could engage to anything! You may fancy how I cursed myself for being so blind; but a fellow never thinks his own sister charming at all—and what else could I have done at any rate? All I hoped for, was to get aboard of some Indiaman at St Helena, and there was nothing else I wearied to see the island again for. I may say I walked the brig's lee quarterdeck till daybreak; but anyhow the lookout from the foreyard had scarce sung out 'St

Helena on the weather-bow!' when I was up, making out the round blue cloud in the midst of the horizon, with a white streak across it, like a bird afloat in the hazy blue, with the clear gleam from eastward off our starboard quarter running round to it.

CHAPTER XXI

"AS soon as you near St Helena by a few miles, the trade-wind falls light, and making the rock, as you do from the South Atlantic, a good deal to leeward of the harbour, 'twould be pretty slow work beating round to north-east, but for the breeze always coming off the height, with the help of which one can coast easy enough along. Captain Wallis said no more than to bid the first lieutenant make the brig's number at her mast-head, while she still bore in direct upon the breast of the land, as much out of soundings as the day before; the smooth heavy swell seeming to float the island up in one huge lump ahead of us, till you saw it rolling into the very foot, with a line of surf, as if it all rose sheer out of the bottom of the sea; as grim and hard as a block of iron, too, and a good deal the same colour. By noon it hung fairly, as it were, over our mast-heads, the brig looking by comparison as tiny and as ticklish as a craft made of glass, she coasting away round, with yards braced first one way then another, and opening point after point from three hundred to two thousand feet high; while at times she would go stealing in with a faint ripple at her bows, near enough to hear the deep sound of the sea plunging slowly to the face of the rock, where the surf rose white against it without a break.

"There wasn't so much as a weed to be seen, the rocks getting redder and more coppery, sending out the light like metal, till you'd have thought they tingled all over with the heat. Then as you opened another bulge in the line, the sharp sugarloaf hills, far away up, with the ragged cliffs and crags, shot over against the bare white sky in all sort of shapes; and after a good long spell of the sea, there was little fancy needed to give one the notion that they were changing into these, as we passed ahead, to mock you. There was one

peak for all the world like the top of St Paul's, and no end of church spires and steeples, all lengths and ways; then big bells and trumpets, mixed with wild beasts' heads, grinning at each other across some split in the blue beyond, and soldiers' helmets—not to speak of one huge block, like a nigger's face with a cowl behind it, hanging far out over the water. Save for the colour of it all, in fact, St Helena reminds one more of a tremendous iceberg than an island, and not the less that it looks ready in some parts to topple over and show a new face; while the sea working round it, surging into the hollows below water-mark, and making the air groan inside of them, keeps up a noise the like of which you wouldn't wish to cruise alongside of every day. The strangest thing about it, however, was that now and then, as you came abreast of some deep gully running up inland, a sudden blast of wind would rush out of it, sufficient to make the *Podargus* reel—with a savage thundering roar, too, like the howl out of a lion's mouth; while you looked far up a narrow, bare, black glen, closing into a hubbub of red rocks, or losing itself up a grey hillside in a white thread of a water-course; then the rough shell of the island shut in again, as still as before, save the light breeze and the deep hum of the surf along its foot. Curiously enough in a latitude like St Helena's, the island seems, as it were, a perfect bag of air. What with the heat of the rock, its hollow inside, the high peaks of it catching the clouds, and the narrow outlets it has, 'tis always brewing wind, you may say, to ventilate that part of the tropics—just as one may keep up cold draughts through and through a wet heap of loose stones, no matter how hot the weather is, as long as he pleases. As for a landing-place, though, there wasn't one of the gullies that didn't yawn over without falling to the sea; and, not to mention the surf underneath, where the dark swell came in unbroken from deep water without a shoal to soften it, why, watching it from the brig's side, I shouldn't have said a cat could scramble up or down the steep slopes and the wreck of stones, from the water's edge to the jaws of the easiest gully you saw.

“Once or twice, standing farther off, we caught sight of Diana's Peak over the shoulder of a hill, with the light haze melting about it; at last you noticed a large gun mounted against the sky on a lofty peak, where it looked like a huge

telescope; and on clearing another headland, a beautiful frigate came in between us and the burst of light to seaward, cruising to windward under easy sail. She bore up and stood towards the brig-of-war, just as the line of wall was to be seen winding round the middle of Sugarloaf Point, where the sentry's bayonet glittered near his watch-box, and the soldiers' red coats could be seen moving through the covered passage to the batteries. Five minutes after, the *Podargus* swept round the breast of Rupert's Hill into the bay, in sight of Jamestown and the ships lying off the harbour; clewing up her sails and ready to drop anchor, as the frigate hove to not far astern.

"You can fancy land heaving in sight after thrice as many weeks as you've been at sea, ladies; or the view of a ship to a man that's been long laid up in bed ashore; or a gulp of fresh water in a sandy desert—but I question if any of them matches your first glimpse of Jamestown from the roadstead, like a bright piece of fairy-work in the mouth of the narrow brown valley, after seeing desolation enough to make you wish for a clear horizon again. More especially this time, when all the while one couldn't help bringing to mind one's notion of the French Emperor, how, not long ago, the sight of the French coast, or a strange frigate over the Channel swell, used to make us think of him far ashore, with half the earth for his own, and millions of soldiers. We reefers down in the cockpit would save our grog to drink confusion to Napoleon, and in a rough night near a lee-shore, it was look alive aloft, or choose betwixt cold brine and the clutch of a gendarme hauling you to land. I do believe we looked upon him as a sort of god, as Captain Wallis did in the Temple; every ship or gunboat we saw taken, or had a hand in the mauling of, why, 'twas for the sheer sake of the thing, and scarce by way of harm to Boney; while nothing like danger, from breakers on the lee-bow to a November gale, but had seemingly a taste of him. None of us any more thought of bringing him to this, than we did of his marching into London, or of a French frigate being able to rake our old *Pandora* in a set-to on green water or blue, wiith us to handle her.

"But *there* was the neat little cluster of houses, white, yellow, and green, spreading down close together in the bottom of the valley, and out along the sea's edge; the rough

brown cliffs sloping up on each side, with the ladder-like way to the fort on the right, mounting, as it were, out of the very street, to the flagstaff on the top, and dotted with red-coats going up and down; a bright line of a pier and a wall before the whole, the Government House dazzling through a row of spreading trees, and a little square church-tower to be seen beyond. 'Twas more like a scene in a play, than aught else; what with the suddenness of it all, the tiny look of it betwixt the huge rocks, the greenness of the trees and bushes, and patches of garden struggling up as far as they could go into the stone, and the gay little toys of cottages, with scarce flat enough to stand upon; save for the blue swell of the sea plunging lazily in through the bit of a bay, and the streak of air behind, that let you in high over the head of the hollow, up above one height and another, to a flat-headed blue rise in the distance, where Longwood could be seen from the main-cross-trees I had gone to as the sails were furled.

"The sunlight, striking from both the red sides of the ravine, made the little village of a place, trees and all, glitter in a lump together, out of it, like no spot in the rest of the world; while elsewhere there wasn't so much as a weed to be seen hanging from the rock, nor the sign of another human habitation, saving the bare batteries on each hand, with a few sheds and warehouses over the beach along the landing-place. Once or twice the same sudden gust as before would come slap down through the valley into the brig's bare rigging, hot as the air was, with a howling kind of a sigh you took some time to get accustomed to, lest there was a hurricane to follow: in fact, one didn't well know whether it was the wild look of it outside, or the lovely spot in its grim mouth of a landing-place, but the whole island gave you the notion of a thing you couldn't be long sure of, without fancying it would give a shake some day or other again; or else spout fire, as no doubt it had done before, if there wasn't more fear of Napoleon getting back somehow to France, and wreaking bloody vengeance on the kings that shut him up in St Helena.

"There was apparently a busy scene ashore, however, both in the little town, which has scarce more than a single street, and along the quay, full of residents, as well as passengers from two Indiamen lying in-shore of us, while the Government

esplanade seemed to be crowded with ladies, listening to the regimental band under the trees. The *Newcastle* frigate, with Sir Dudley Aldcombe's flag hoisted at her mizzen, was at anchor out abreast at Ladder Hill; and our first lieutenant had scarce pulled aboard of the *Hebe*, which was hove-to off the brig's quarter, before I noticed the Admiral's barge lying alongside the *Hebe*.

"Seeing Mr Aldridge on his way back shortly after, I came down the rigging, more anxious than ever to have my own matter settled; indeed, Captain Wallis no sooner caught sight of my face, uncomfortable as I daresay it looked, than he told me he was going to wait on the Admiral aboard the *Hebe*, and would take me with him at once, if I chose. For my part, I needed nothing but the leave, and in ten minutes' time I found myself, no small mark of curiosity, betwixt the waist and the quarterdeck of the *Hebe*, where the officers eyed me with as little appearance of rudeness as they could help, and I overhauled the spars and rigging aloft as coolly as I could, waiting to be sent for below. The *Hebe*, in fact, was the very beauty of a twenty-eight; taking the shine, and the wind, too, clean out of everything even at Plymouth, where I had seen her once a year or two before; our poor dear old *Iris* herself had scarce such a pattern of a hull, falling in, as it did, from the round swell of her bilge, to just under the plank-sheer, and spreading out again with her bright black top-sides, till where the figurehead shot over the cut-water, and out of her full pair of bows, like a swan's neck out of its breast. As for the *Iris*, our boatswain himself one day privately confessed to me, almost with tears in his eyes, that she tumbled home a thought too much just in front of the fore-chains, and he'd tried to get it softened off with dead planking and paint, but it wouldn't do; everybody saw through them. The truth was, to feel this fine ship under one, with her loose topsails hanging high against the gloom of the red gully towards Longwood, and the gay little town peeping just over her larboard bow, a mile away, it somehow or other cleared one's mind of a load.

"I was thinking already how, if one had the command of such a craft, to do something with her at sea—hang it! but surely that old judge couldn't be too proud to give him a fair hearing. By Jove! thought I—had one only wild enough

weather, off the Cape, say—if I wouldn't undertake to bother even a seventy-four a whole voyage through, till she struck her flag; in which case a fellow might really venture to hold his head up and speak his mind, lovely as Violet Hyde would be in Calcutta. But then, again, *there* was St Helena towering red and rough over the ships, with the grand French Emperor hidden in it hard and fast, and all the work he used to give us at an end!

"Just at the moment, happening to catch sight of the American mate's sallow black visage over the brig-of-war's hammock-cloths, peering as he did from the cliffs to the lofty spars of the frigate, while his negro shipmates were to be made out nearer the bows—somehow or other the whole affair of their being burnt out and picked up started into my mind again, along with our late queer adventures in the Indiaman. Not to mention Captain Wallis's story, it flashed upon me all at once, for the first time, that the strange schooner was after some scheme as regarded the island; and a man more likely to try something uncommon than the Frenchman I never had seen yet. The truth was, but for my thoughts being otherwise taken up, I'd have wondered at my own confounded stupidity in not fathoming the thing sooner; whereas now I'm not going to deny it, I half began actually to wish him good success, or else a close miss of it, where either way one couldn't well fail having a share in the squall.

"At any rate, I saw it was cunningly enough gone about; this same burnt barque of the Yankee's, I perceived in a moment, was part of the plot; though as for meddling in it till I saw more, 'twas likely to spoil the whole; let alone making an ass of oneself in case of mistake. I was eyeing the shipwrecked mate, indeed, when one of the lieutenants told me politely the Admiral wanted to see me in the cabin below.

"Not being much accustomed to admirals' society, as a little white-haired fellow-reefer of mine once said at a tea-party ashore, I came in at the door with rather an awkward bow, no doubt; for Sir Dudley, who was sitting on the sofa with his cocked hat and sword beside him, talking to Captain Wallis, turned his head at the captain's word, as if he were trying to keep in a smile. A tall, fine-looking man he was, and few seamen equal to him for handling a large fleet, as I

knew, though his manners were finished enough to have made him easy in a king's court. As for the captain of the *Hebe*, he was leaning out of an open stern-window, seemingly a young man; but who he might be I didn't know at the moment. The Admiral had only a question or two to put, before he looked back to Captain Wallis again, remarking it was clear he had brought away the wrong man. 'I didn't think you were so dull in the *Podargus*,' said he, smiling, 'as to let an Indianman play off such a trick on you—eh, Captain Wallis!'

"Captain Wallis glanced round the cabin, and then sideways down at Sir Dudley's cocked hat, in a funny enough way, as much as to say he took all the blame on himself; and it struck me more than ever what a kind heart the man had in him—if you only set aside his hatred to Bonaparte, which in fact was nothing else but a twisted sort of proof of the same thing. 'Pooh, pooh, Wallis,' continued Sir Dudley, 'we can't do anything in the matter; though, if the service were better than it really is at present, I should certainly incline to question a smart young fellow like this, that has held His Majesty's commission, for idling in an Indianman after the lady passengers! I am afraid, sir,' said he to me, 'you've lost your passage, though—unless the captain of the *Hebe* will give you his second berth here, to make amends. You need not be afraid, Lord Frederick!' added he, looking toward the captain of the frigate, and raising his voice; 'you do not know him, after all, I suppose!' The captain drew in his head, saying he had been doubtful about one of the pivots of the rudder, then turned full round and looked uneasily at me, on which his face brightened immediately, and he said, 'No, Sir Dudley, I do not!' I was still in ignorance for a moment or so, myself, who this titled young post-captain might be, though I had certainly seen him before; till all at once I recollected him, with a start as pleasant to me as his seemed to him at *not* knowing me. Both Westwood and I had been midshipmen together for a while in the *Orion*, fifty-gun ship, where *he* was second lieutenant, several years before. As for me, I was too fond of a frigate to stay longer in her than I could help; but I remembered my being a pest to the second lieutenant, and Tom's being a favourite of his, so that he stayed behind me, and got master's-mate as soon as he was 'passed.'

"The Honourable Frederick Bury he was then, and the handsomest young fellow in the squadron, as well as the best-natured aboard; I don't believe he knew how to splice in a dead-eye, and any of the masters'-mates could take charge of the ship better in a rough night, I daresay; but for a gallant affair in the way of hard knocks, with management to boot, there wasn't his match. He never was known to fail when he took a thing in hand; lost fewer men, too, than anyone else did; and whenever there turned up anything ticklish for the boats, it was always 'Mr Bury will lead.' 'The Honourable Bury,' we used to call him, and 'Fighting Free-the-deck.' Westwood was one of his school, whereas *I* had learnt from Jacobs in a merchantman's forecastle; and many a time did we play off such tricks on the second lieutenant as coming gravely aft to him during the watch, three or four of us together, me carrying a bit of rope where a 'Turk's-head' or a 'mouse' was to be worked, while I asked him innocently to show us the way. Or else it was some dispute we contrived beforehand, as to the best plan of sending up new topmasts at sea, or running out of a 'round' gale in the Indian Ocean, on which the men forward would be all ready to break out laughing; and the second lieutenant, after thinking a moment, would quietly pitch upon me to go aloft, and study the point for two hours at the mast-head.

"'What is *your* name then, young man?' inquired Sir Dudley Aldcombe of me. The instant I told him, Lord Frederick Bury gave me another look, then a smile. 'What?' said he, 'Collins that was in the *Orion*?' 'Yes, Lord Frederick,' said I, 'the same; I was third in the *Iris* off the West African coast since then.' 'Why,' said he, 'I recollect you quite well, Mr Collins, although you have grown a foot, I think, sir—but your eye reminds me of sundry pranks you used to play on board! What nickname was it your messmates called you, by-the-by?' 'Something foolish enough, I suppose, my lord,' replied I, biting my lip; 'but I remember clearly having the honour to steer the second cutter in-shore one dark night near Dunkirk, when your lordship carried the Dutch brig and the two French chasse-marées——'

"'Faith,' broke in the captain of the *Hebe*, 'you've a better memory than I have—I do not recollect any chasse-marées at all that time, Mr Collins!' 'Why,' said I, 'I got

a knock on the head from a fellow in a red shirt—that always kept me in mind.’ ‘Oh,’ remarked the Admiral to Captain Wallis, laughing, ‘Lord Frederick Bury must have had so many little parties of the kind that his memory can’t be expected to be very nice! However, I shall go ashore at present, gentlemen, leaving the *Hebe* and you to dispose of this runaway lieutenant in some way or other. Only you’d better settle it before Admiral Plampin arrives!’ ‘Have you seen the—the—Longwood lately, Sir Dudley?’ asked the captain of the *Podargus* carelessly. ‘Yes, not many days ago I had an interview,’ said the Admiral gravely; ‘proud as ever, and evidently resolved not to flinch from his condition. ’Tis wonderful the command that man has over himself, Wallis—he speaks of the whole world and its affairs like one that sees into them, and had them still nearly under his foot! All saving those miserable squabbles with Plantation House, which—but, next time I shall take my leave, and wash my hands of the whole concern, I am glad to think!’

“Lord Frederick was talking to me meanwhile at the other end of the cabin, but I was listening in spite of myself to Sir Dudley Aldcombe, and noticed that Captain Wallis made no answer. ‘By-the-way, Wallis,’ continued the Admiral, ‘tis curious that he seemed anxious more than once to know what you think of him—I believe he would like to see you!’ ‘To see *me*!’ said the commander of the *Podargus*, suddenly. ‘At last, does he! No, Sir Dudley, he and I never *will* meet; he ought to have thought of it twelve years sooner! God knows,’ he went on, ‘the commander of a ten-gun brig is too small a man to see the Emperor Napoleon a prisoner; but in ten years of war, Sir Dudley, what mightn’t one have been, instead of being remembered after as only plain John Wallis, whom Bonaparte kept all that time in prison, and who was sent in course of time, to cruise off St Helena?’ Here the Admiral said something about a British sailor not keeping malice, and Captain Wallis looked up at him gravely. ‘No,’ replied he; ‘no, Sir Dudley, I shouldn’t have *chosen* the thing; but in the meantime I’m only doing my duty. There’s a gloomy turn in my mind by this time, no doubt; but you’ve no idea, Sir Dudley, how the thought of other people comes into one’s head when he’s years shut up—so *I* may stand for many a one Bonaparte will never see

more than myself, that'll ring him round surer than those rocks there, though they're dead and in their graves, Sir Dudley!' The Admiral shook his head, observing that Napoleon was no common man, and oughtn't to be judged as such. 'Too many victories in that eye of his, I suspect, Captain Wallis,' said he, 'for either Plantation House or his own conscience to break his spirit!'

"'Ay, ay, sir,' answered the captain respectfully, 'excuse me, Sir Dudley, but there it is—so long as he's got his victories to fall back upon, he can't see how, if he'd regarded common men more, with all belonging to them, he wouldn't have been here! Why did Providence shut him up in a dead volcano, with blue water round it, Sir Dudley, if it wasn't to learn somehow or other he was a man after all?' Sir Dudley Aldcombe shrugged his shoulders and looked to Lord Frederick, upon which he rose, and the two captains followed him out of the cabin; in five minutes I heard the side piped for the Admiral's leaving, and soon after the captain of the *Hebe* came below again.

"'This is a disagreeable affair of your old messmate's, Mr Collins,' said he seriously. 'You are, perhaps, not aware that Captain Duncombe was a relative of my own, and the fact of his property having fallen by will to myself, rendered my position the more peculiarly disagreeable, had I been obliged not only to recognise Lieutenant Westwood here, but afterwards to urge proceedings against him, even if he were let off by court-martial. I cannot tell you how the sight of a stranger, as I thought, relieved me, sir!' 'Indeed, Lord Frederick!' replied I, too much confused in the circumstances to say more. However, his lordship's manner soon set me at my ease, the old good-humoured smile coming over his fine features again, while he went on to offer me the place of his second lieutenant, who was going home very ill by one of the homeward-bound Indiamen; adding, that Sir Dudley would confirm the appointment; indeed, he could scarce help himself, he said, as there was nobody else he could get at present.

"'You must be a thorough good sailor by this time, Collins,' continued he, 'if you have gone on at the rate you used to do. I remember how fond you were of having charge for a minute or two of the old *Orion*, or when I let

you put her about in my watch. Why they called you "Young Green" I never could understand, unless it was *ut lucus a non lucendo*, as we used to say at Eton, you know. Well, what do you say?' Now, as you may suppose, the idea of boxing about St Helena, for Heaven knew how long, didn't at all suit my liking—with the thought of the *Seringapatam* steering away from Bombay the whole time, and a hundred notions of Violet Hyde in India—'twould have driven me madder than the Temple did Captain Wallis: but it was only the *first* part of my mind I gave Lord Frederick. 'What!' exclaimed he, with a flush over his face, and drawing up his tall figure, 'you didn't suppose, I should remain here? Why, the *Hebe* is on her way for Calcutta and Canton, and will sail as soon as the *Conqueror* arrives at Jamestown with Admiral Plampin.' 'Your lordship is very kind,' said I, looking down to cover my delight; 'and if I am not worthy of the post it shan't be my fault, Lord Frederick.' 'Ah, very good!' said he smiling; 'tis an opportunity you oughtn't to let slip, Collins, let me tell you! For my own part, I should just as soon cut out a pirate in the Straits of Malacca as a French brig in the Channel; and there are plenty of them, I hear, there. As for a chase, sir, I flatter myself you won't easily see a finer thing than the *Hebe* spreading her cloth after one of those fast proas will be—I think you are just the fellow to make her walk, too, Mr Collins—pah! to compare a day on the Derby turf with *that*, would be a sin! You have no idea, sir, how one longs for a fair horizon again, and brisk breezes, when so ineffably tired out of all those ball-rooms, and such things as you see about town just now—only I fear I shall wish to be second lieutenant again, eh?'

"The noble captain of the *Hebe* turned to look out through the stern window to seaward, his face losing the weary sort of half-melancholy cast it had shown for the last minute, while his eye glistened; and it struck me how well matched the *Hebe* and her commander were; you'd have said both had good blood in them, both being models to look at of their kind, and the frigate lifting under you at the moment, from the keel upward, with a check aloft in her main-topsail, that lifted her stem to the surge. A small telescope rolled off the sofa on to the cabin deck, and as

I picked it up, another gust could be heard coming down St James Valley from inside the island; through the gun-port one saw the trees wave over the hot white houses in the bright-coloured little town, while the ship's canvas gave another flutter above-decks. Lord Frederick laughed, and said, 'Then I suppose we need say no more about it, Mr Collins, except referring once for all to Sir Dudley?' I bowed, and the upshot was, that, an hour or two after, I had my acting commission sent me from the Admiral, the same boat having called at the *Podargus* for my things; upon which Lord Frederick introduced me to the first lieutenant, and I found myself once more doing duty in the service—the *Hebe* standing out to leeward with the last light, just as the *Podargus* was tripping anchor to beat round again the other way. As for our friends from the burnt vessel, I must say I had forgot them already, for the time at least.

"Every block, crag, and knot in the huge crust of the rock shone terribly bright for a minute or two, aloft from over the yard-ends, as she stood suddenly out into the fiery gleam of the sun going down many a mile in the Atlantic. Then up leapt the light keener and keener to the very topmost peak, till you'd have thought it went in like a living thing behind a telegraph, that stood out against a black cleft betwixt two cliffs. We saw the evening gun off Ladder Hill flash upon the deep blue of the sky, seemingly throwing up the peak and flagstaff a dozen feet higher; and the boom of the gun sounding in among the wild hills and hollows within the island, as if one heard it going up to Longwood door. Scarce was it lost, ere a star or two were to be seen in the shadow on the other side, and you listened almost, in the hush following upon the gunfire, for an echo to it, or something stranger; in place of which the *Hebe* was already forging ahead in the dark to get well clear of the land, every wave bringing its own blackness with it up toward her forechains, then sparkling back to her waist in the seeth of foam as she felt the breeze; while St Helena lay towering along to larboard, with its ragged top blotting against the deep dark blue of the sky, all filling as it was with the stars.

"I had the middle watch that night, the ship being under short canvas, and slowly edging down to make the most

leewardly point of the island, from which she was to beat up again at her leisure by the morning. All we had to do was to keep a good lookout, on the one hand, into the streak of starlight to seaward, and on the other along the foot of the rocks, as well as holding her well in hand, in case of some sudden squall through the valleys from inside.

"However, I shan't easily forget the thoughts that ran in my mind, walking the quarterdeck with the frigate under charge, the first time I noticed Orion and the Serpent begin to wheel glittering away from over Diana's Peak—the others stealing quietly into sight after them, past the leech of our main-topsail; scarce an English star to be seen for the height of the island off our quarter; some of the men on one side of the booms humming a song about Napoleon's dream, which you'll hear to this day in ships' forecastles; another yarning solemnly, on the other side, about some old sweetheart of his—but all of them ready to jump at my own least word. In the morning, however, there we were, stretching back by degrees to go round the lee side of the island again, the haze melting off Diana's Peak as before, and the sea rolling in swells as blue as indigo, to the huge red lumps of bare crag; while the bright surges leapt out of them all along the frigate's side, and the spray rose at times to her figure-head.

"During the day we cruised farther out, and the *Hebe* had enough to do in seeing off one Indiaman for home, and speaking another outward-bound craft, that passed forty miles off or so, without touching; the Governor's telegraphs were eternally at work on the heights, bothering her for the least trifle, and making out a sail sixty miles off, it was said. For my part, I was pretty well tired of it already, sincerely wishing for the *Conqueror*, with Admiral Plampin, to heave in sight; but glad enough all aboard the *Hebe* were, when, after an entire week of the thing, it came to her turn, with the *Newcastle* and *Podargus*, to lie at anchor off Jamestown, where half the ship's company at a time had their liberty ashore.

"For my part, I had to see after the frigate's water-tanks, and a gang at the rigging, till the afternoon, when Lord Frederick took the first lieutenant and myself ashore with him in his gig; and no joke it was landing even there, where

the swell of the surf nigh-hand hove her right up on the quay, while you had to look sharp, in case the next wave washed you back again off your feet. The whole place was hot as could be from the sun's rays off the rocks, slanting bare red to the cloudless sky, on both sides of the neat little gaudy houses crowded in the mouth of the valley, which narrowed away beyond the rise of the street, till you didn't see how you'd get farther. But for the air of the sea, indeed, with now and then a breath down out of the hills, 'twas for all the world like a half-kindled oven; except under the broad trees along the Government esplanade, where one couldn't have stood for people. What with blacks, lascars, Chinamen, and native 'Yamstocks,' together with liberty-men from the men-of-war and Indiamen, as well as reefers trotting about on ponies and donkeys, the very soldiers could scarce get down the foot of the road up Ladder Hill; as for the little town holding one half of them, it was out of the question, but the noise and kick-up were beyond aught else of the kind, save in a Calcutta bazaar. Accordingly, it was pleasant enough at last to come within a shady walk of thick green fig-trees, growing almost out of the rock near the main battery, above the small sound of the water far below; the very sea looking bluer through the leaves, while some birds no bigger than wrens hopped, chirruping, about the branches.

"Here we met Sir Dudley Aldcombe coming down from the batteries along with some Company's officers from India, and he stopped to speak to Lord Frederick, giving the first lieutenant and me a bow in return, as we lifted our hats and waited behind. The Admiral proposed to get Lord Frederick a pass to visit Napoleon along with himself next day, as the *Conqueror* would probably arrive very soon. 'You will oblige me greatly, Sir Dudley,' said the captain of the *Hebe*. 'He seems as fond of seeing a true sailor,' said the Admiral, 'as if we'd never done him harm. Things will be worse after I go. By-the-way,' added he suddenly, 'tis curious enough, but there's one person in the island at present has made wonderful progress in Sir Hudson's good graces, for the short time—that American botanist, or whatever he calls himself, that Captain Wallis took off the burnt vessel on his way here. Your new lieutenant was aboard at the time, you know, Lord Frederick.' 'You saw him, sir, of course?' said the Admiral

looking to me. 'Only for a minute that night, Sir Dudley,' said I; 'and afterwards both he and his servant were under the surgeon's charge below.' 'Well,' continued Sir Dudley to the captain, 'they seem quite recovered now; for I saw them to-day up at Plantation House, where the philosopher was in close discourse with the Governor about plants and such things; while her ladyship was as much engaged with the assistant, who can only speak Spanish. A remarkable-looking man the latter is, too; a Mexican, I understand, with Indian blood in him, apparently—whereas his principal has a strong Yankee twang; and queer enough it was to hear him snuffling away as solemnly as possible about *buttany* and such things—besides his hinting at some great discovery likely to be made in the island, which Sir Hudson seemed rather anxious to keep quiet from *me*.'

"What Sir Dudley said made me prick up my ears, as you may fancy. I could scarce believe the thing; 'twas so thoroughly rich and so confoundedly cool at once, to risk striking at the very heart of things this way with the Governor himself; but the whole scheme, so far, flashed upon me in a moment, evidently carried on, as it had been all along, by some one bold enough for anything earthly, and with no small cunning besides. All that he needed, no doubt, was *somebody else* with the devil's own impudence and plenty of talk; nor, if I'd thought for a day together, could one have pitched easily upon a customer as plausible as our friend Daniel, who hadn't a spark of fear in him, I knew, just owing to his want of respect for aught in the entire creation. Still, I couldn't, for the life of me, see what the end of their plan was to be, unless the strange Frenchman might have been some general or other under Bonaparte, and just wanted to see his old commander once more; which, thought I, I'll be hanged if I don't think fair enough, much pains as he had put himself to for the thing.

"'How!' asked Lord Frederick, 'a discovery did you say, Sir Dudley?' 'Oh, nothing of the kind *we* should care about, after all,' said the Admiral; 'from what I could gather, 'twas only scientific, though the American called it "*a pretty important fact*."' This Mr Mathewson Brown, I believe, was sent by the States Government as botanist in an expedition to southward, and has leave from Sir Hudson to use his oppor-

tunity before the next Indiaman sails, for examining part of the island, and to-day he thought he found the same plants in St Helena as he did in Gough's Island and Tristan d'Acunha, twelve hundred miles off, near the Cape, showing, as he said, how once on a time there must have been land between them, perhaps as far as Ascension!' 'Why,' put in Lord Frederick, 'that would have made a pretty good empire, even for Napoleon!' 'So it would, my lord,' said Sir Dudley, 'much better than Elba; but the strangest part of it is, this Mr Brown was just telling his Excellency, as I entered the room, that some of the ancient philosophers wrote about this said country existing in the Atlantic before the Flood—how rich it was, with the kings it had, and the wars carried on there; till, on account of their doings, no doubt, what with an earthquake, a volcano, and the ocean together, they all sunk to the bottom except the tops of the mountains! Now, I must say,' continued the Admiral, 'all this learning seemed to one to come rather too much by rote out of this gentleman's mouth, and the American style of his talk made it somewhat ludicrous, though he evidently believed in what may be all very true—particularly in mentioning the treasures that must lie under water for leagues round, or even in nooks about the St Helena rocks; I thought his very teeth watered. As for Sir Hudson, he had caught at the idea altogether, but rather in view of an historical work on the island, from the earliest times till now—and I believe he means to accompany the two botanists himself over toward Longwood to-morrow, where we may very likely get sight of them.'

"'O—h!'" thought I, and Lord Frederick Bury smiled. 'Rather a novelty, indeed!' said he; and the first lieutenant looked significantly enough to me, as we leant over the battery-wall, watching the hot horizon through the spars of the ships before Jamestown. 'What amused me,' Sir Dudley said again, 'was the American botanist's utter indifference, when I asked if he had seen anything of "The General" in the distance. The Governor started, glancing sharp at Mr Brown, and I noticed his dark companion give a sudden side-look from the midst of his talk with her ladyship; whereupon the botanist merely pointed with his thumb to the floor, asking coolly 'what it was to science?' 'At this,' added Sir Dudley to the captain, 'His Excellency seemed much relieved; and

after having got leave for myself and your lordship to-morrow, I left them still in the spirit of it. It certainly struck me that, in the United States themselves, educated men in general couldn't have such a vulgar manner about them—in fact, I thought the Mexican attendant more the gentleman of the two—his face was turned half from me most of the time, but still it struck me as remarkably intelligent.' 'Ah,' said Lord Frederick carelessly, 'all the Spaniards have naturally a noble sort of air, you know, Sir Dudley—they'll never make republicans!' 'And I must say,' added the Admiral, as they strolled out of the shade up the battery-steps, 'little as I know of Latin, what this Mr Brown used *did* seem to me fearfully bad!'

"'And no wonder!' thought I, from a Yankee schoolmaster as I had found my late shipmate was, before he thought of travelling; but the valuable Daniel turning his hand to help out some communication or other, no doubt, with Napoleon Bonaparte in St Helena, took me at first as so queer an affair, that I didn't know whether to laugh at him or admire his Yankee coolness, when he ran such risks. As for the feasibility of actually getting the prisoner clear out of the island, our cruising on guard was enough to show me it would be little short of a miracle; yet I couldn't help thinking they meant to try it; and in case of a dark night, which the south-easter was very likely to bring, if it shifted or freshened a little, why, I knew you needn't call anything impossible that a cool head and a bold heart had to do with, provided only they could get their plans laid inside and out so as to tally. The more eager I got for next day, when it would be easy enough for any of us to go up inland after Lord Frederick, as far as Hut's Gate at least. Meantime, the first lieutenant and I walked up together to where the little town broke into a sort of suburb of fancy cottages, with verandahs and green venetians in bungalow style, scattered to both sides of the rock amongst little grass-plots and garden patches—every foot of ground made use of. And a perfect gush of flowers and leaves it was, clustering over the tiles of the low roofs, while you saw through a thicket of poplars and plantains right into the back of the gully, with a ridge of black rock closing it fair up, and Side Path, as they call the road to windward, winding overhead along the crag behind the houses, out of

sight round a mass of cliffs. Every here and there, a runlet of water came trickling down from above the trees to water their roots; you saw the mice in hundreds scampering in and out of holes in the dry stone, with now and then a big ugly rat that turned round to face you, being no doubt fine game to the St Helena people, ill off as they all seemed for something to do—except the Chinese with their huge hats, hoeing away under almost every tree one saw, and the Yamstock fishermen to be seen bobbing for mullet outside the ships, in a blaze of light sufficient to bake any heads but their own. Every cottage had seven or eight parrots in it, apparently; a cockatoo on a stand by the door, or a monkey up in a box—not to speak of canaries in the window, and white goats feeding about with bells round their necks: so you may suppose what a jabbering, screaming, whistling, and tinkling there was up the whole hollow, added to no end of children and young ladies making the most of the shade as it got near nightfall—and all that were out of doors came flocking down Side Path.

“Both of us having leave ashore that night, for a ball in one of these same little bungalows near the head of the valley, ’twas no use to think of a bed, and as little to expect getting off to the ship, which none could do after gunfire. For that matter, I daresay there might be twenty such parties, full of young reefers and homeward-bound old East Indians, keeping it up as long as might be, because they had nowhere to sleep. The young lady of the house we were in was one of the St Helena beauties, called ‘The Rosebud,’ from her colour. A lovely creature she was, certainly, as it was plain our *Hebe’s* first lieutenant thought, with several more to boot: every sight of her figure gliding about through the rest, the white muslin floating round her like haze, different as her face was, made one think of the *Seringapatam’s* deck at sea, with the men walking the forecastle in the middle watch, and the poop quiet over the judge’s cabins.

“Two or three times I had fancied for a moment that, if one had somewhat stirring to busy himself with, why, he might so far forget what was no doubt likely to interfere pretty much with a profession like my own; and so it might have been, perhaps, had I only seen her ashore; whereas now, whether it was ashore or afloat, by Jove! everything

called her somehow to mind. The truth is, I defy you to get rid very easily of the thought about one you've sailed in the same ship with, be it girl or woman : the same bottom betwixt you and the water, the same breeze blowing your pilot-coat in the watch on deck that ripples past her ear below, and the self-same dangers to strive against ! At a break in the dance I went out of the dancing-room into the verandah, where the cool of the air among the honeysuckle-flowers and creepers was delightful to feel ; though it was quite dark in the valley, and you couldn't make out anything but the solemn black-blue of the sky full of stars above you, between the two cliffs ; or right out, where the stretch of sea, widening to the horizon, looked almost white through the mouth of the valley over the house-roofs below ; one heard the small surf plashing low and slow into the little bay, with the boats dipping at their moorings, but I never saw sea look so lonely. Then up at the head of the gully one could mark the steep black crag that shut it up, glooming quiet and large against a gleam from one of the clusters of stars ; the sight of it was awful, I didn't know well why, unless by comparison with the lively scene inside, not to say with one's own whole life afloat, as well as the wishes one had at heart. 'Twas pretty late, but I heard the music strike up again in the room, and was going back again, when all of a sudden I thought the strangest sound that ever came to one's ears went sweeping round and round far above the island, more like the flutter of a sail miles wide than aught else I can fancy ; then a rush of something like those same blasts of wind I was pretty well used to by this time—but wind it was not—growing in half-a-minute to a rumbling clatter, and then to a smothered roar, as if something more than mortal shot from inland down through the valley, and passed out by its mouth into the open sea at once. I scarce felt the ground heave under me, though I thought I saw the black head of the ravine lift against the stars—one terrible plunge of the sea down at the quays and batteries, then everything was still again ; but the whole dancing-party came rushing out in confusion at my back, the ladies shrieking, the men looking up into the sky, or at the cliffs on both sides ; the British flag, over the fort on Ladder Hill, blowing out steadily to a

stiff breeze aloft. It wasn't for some time, in fact, that they picked up courage again to say it had been an earthquake. However, the ball was over, and, as soon as matters could be set to rights, it was nothing but questions whether it had aught to do with *him* up at Longwood, or hadn't been an attempt to blow up the island—some of the officers being so much taken aback at first, that they fancied the French had come.

“At last, however, we, who had nothing else for it, got stowed away on sofas or otherwise about the dancing-room; for my part, I woke up just early enough to see the high head of the valley coming out as clearly as before against the morning light, and the water glancing blue out miles away beyond the knot of ships in the opening. The news was only that Napoleon was safe, having been in his bed at the time, where he lay thinking one of the frigates had blown up, they said. Not a word of his that got wind but the people in Jamestown made it their day's text—in the want of which they'd even gossip about the coat he wore that morning; till you'd have said the whole nest of them, soldiers and all, lay under his shadow as the town did at the foot of the cliffs, just ready to vanish as soon as he went down. The Longwood doctor had told someone in the Jew Solomon's toy-shop, by the forenoon, that Bonaparte couldn't sleep that night for making some calculations about a great battle he had fought, when he counted three separate shocks of the thing, and noticed it was luckily right up and down, or else Jamestown would have been buried under tons of rock. The doctor had mentioned besides that there was twice an earthquake before in the island, in former times; but it didn't need some of the townspeople's looks to tell you they'd be afraid many a night after, lest the French Emperor should wake up thinking of his battles; while, as for myself, I must say the notion stuck to me some time, along with my own ideas at that exact moment; at any rate, not for worlds would I have lived long ashore in St Helena.

CHAPTER XXII

“MR NEWLAND (the first lieutenant) and I set out early in the day, accordingly, with a couple of the *Hebe's* midshipmen, mounted on as many of the little island ponies, to go up inland for a cruise about the hills. You take Side Path along the crags, with a wall betwixt the hard track and the gulf below, till you lose sight of Jamestown like a cluster of children's toy-houses under you, and turn up above a sloping hollow full of green trees and tropical-like flowering shrubs, round a pretty cottage called The Briars—where one begins to have a notion, however, of the bare blocks, the red bluffs, and the sharp peaks standing up higher and higher round the shell of the island. Then you had another rise of it to climb, on which you caught sight of Jamestown and the harbour again, even smaller than before, and saw nothing before your beast's head but a desert of stony ground, running hither and thither into wild staring clefts, grim ravines, and rocks of every size tumbled over each other like figures of ogres and giants in hard fight. After two or three miles of all this, we came in view of Longwood Hill, lying green on a level to north and east, and clipping to windward against the sea beyond; all round it elsewhere was the thick red crust of the island, rising in ragged points and sharp spires—the greenish sugar-loaf of Diana's Peak shooting in the middle over the high ridge that hid the Plantation House side of St Helena to leeward.

“Between the spot where we were and Longwood is a huge fearful-looking black hollow, called the Devil's Punch-bowl, as round and deep as a pitch-pot for caulking all the ships in the world—except on a slope into one corner of it, where you saw a couple of yellow cottages with gardens about them; while every here and there a patch of grass began to appear, a clump of wild weeds and flowers hanging off the fronts of the rocks, or the head of some valley widening away out of sight, with the glimpse of a house amongst trees, where some stream of water came leaping down off the heights and vanished in the boggy piece of green below. From here over the brow of the track it was all like seeing into an immense stone basin half-hewn out, with all the lumps and wrinkles

left rising in it and twisting every way about—the black Devil's Punch-bowl for a hole in the middle, where some infernal liquor or other had run through; the soft bottoms of the valleys just bringing the whole of it up distincter to the green over Longwood Hill; while the ragged heights ran round on every side like a rim with notches in it, and Diana's Peak for a sort of a handle that the clouds could take hold of. All this time we had strained ourselves to get as fast up as possible, except once near the Alarm House, where there was a telegraph signal-post, with a little guard-hut for the soldiers; but *there* each turned round in his saddle, letting out a long breath the next thing to a cry, and heaving-to directly, at sight of the prospect behind. The Atlantic lay wide away round to the horizon from the roads, glittering faint over the ragged edge of the crags we had mounted near at hand; only the high back of the island shut out the other side—save here and there through a deep-notched gully or two—and accordingly you saw the sea blotched out in that quarter to the two sharp bright ends, clasping the dark-coloured lump between them, like a mighty pair of arms lifting it high to carry it off. Soon after, however, the two mids took it into their wise heads the best thing was to go and climb Diana's Peak, where they meant to cut their names at the very top; on which the first lieutenant, who was a careful middle-aged man, thought needful to go with them, lest they got into mischief; for my part, I preferred the chance of coming across the mysterious Yankee and his comrade, as I fancied not unlikely, or, what was less to be looked for, a sight of Bonaparte himself.

“Accordingly, we had parted company, and I was holding single-handed round one side of the Devil's Punch-bowl, when I heard a clatter of horse-hoofs on the road, and saw the Admiral and Lord Frederick riding quickly past on the opposite side, on their way to Longwood—which, curiously enough, was half-covered with mist at the time, driving down from the higher hills, apparently before a regular gale, or rather some kind of a whirlwind. In fact, I learned after, that such was often the case, the climate up there being quite different from below, where they never feel a gale from one year's end to the other. In the next hollow I got into, it was hot and still as it would have been in India, the blackberry-

trailers and wild aloes growing quite thick, mixed with prickly-pear bushes, willows, gumwood, and an African palm or two; though from the look of the sea, I could notice the south-east trade had freshened below, promising to blow a good deal stronger that night than ordinary, and to shift a little round.

"Suddenly the fog began to clear by degrees from over Longwood, till it was fairly before me, nearer than I thought; and just as I rode up a rising ground, out came the roof of a house on the slope amongst some trees, glittering wet as if the sun laid a finger on it; with a low bluish-coloured stretch of wood farther off, bringing out the white tents of the soldiers' camp pitched about the edge of it. Nearly to windward there was one sail in sight on the horizon, over an opening in the rocks beyond Longwood House, that seemingly let down toward the coast; however, I just glanced back to notice the telegraph on the signal-post at work, signalling to the *Podargus* in the offing, and next minute Hut's Gate was right ahead of me, not a quarter of a mile off—a long-shaped bungalow of a cottage, inside of a wall with a gate in it, where I knew I needn't try farther, unless I wanted the sentries to take me under arrest. Betwixt me and it, however, in the low ground, was a party of man-o'-war's-men under charge of a midshipman, carrying some timber and house-furniture for Longwood, as I remembered, from seeing them come ashore from the *Podargus* that morning; so I stood over to give my late shipmates a hail. But the moment I got up with them, it struck me not a little, as things stood, to find three of the four blacks we had taken aboard from that said burnt barque of the American mate's trudging patiently enough under the heaviest loads of the gang. Jetty-black, savage-looking fellows they were, as strong as horses, and reminded me more of our wild friends in the Nouries River, than of States niggers; still, what caught my notice most wasn't so much their being there at all, as the want of the fourth one, and where *he* might be. I don't know yet how this trifling bit of a puzzle got hold on me, but it was the sole thing that kept me from what might have turned a scrape to myself—namely, passing myself in as officer of the party; which was easy enough at the time, and the tars would have entered into the frolic as soon as I started it.

On second thoughts, nevertheless, I bade them good-day, steering my animal away round the slant of the ground, to see after a good perch as near as possible; and I daresay I was getting within the bounds before I knew it when another sentry sung out to me off the heights to keep lower down, first bringing his musket to salute for my uniform's sake, then letting it fall level with a ringing slap of his palm, as much as to say it was all the distinction I'd get over plain clothes.

"At this, of course, I gave it up, with a blessing to all lobster-backs, and made sail down to leeward again as far as the next rise, from which there was a full view of the sea, at any rate, though the face of a rough crag over behind me shut out Longwood House altogether. Here I had to get fairly off the saddle—rather sore, I must say, with riding up St Helena roads after so many weeks at sea—and flung myself down on the grass, with little enough fear of the hungry little beast getting far adrift. This said crag, by-the-way, drew my eye to it by the queer colours it showed, white, blue, grey, and bright red in the hot sunlight; and being too far off to make out clearly, I slung off the ship's glass I had across my back, just to overhaul it better. The hue of it was to be seen running all down the deep rift between, that seemingly wound away into some glen toward the coast; while the lot of plants and trailers half covering the steep front of it, would no doubt, I thought, have delighted my old friend the Yankee, if he *was* the botanising gentleman in question.

"By this time it was a lovely afternoon far and wide to Diana's Peak, the sky glowing clearer deep-blue at that height than you'd have thought sky could do, even in the tropics—the very peaks of bare red rock being softened into a purple tint, far off round you. One saw into the rough bottom of the huge Devil's Punch-bowl, and far through without a shadow down the green patches in the little valleys, and over Deadwood Camp—there was *nothing*, as it were, between the grass, the ground, the stones, and leaves, and the empty hollow of the air; while the sea spread far round underneath, of a softer blue than the sky over you. You'd have thought all the world was shrunk into St Helena, with the Atlantic lying three-quarters round it in one's sight, like the horns of the bright new moon round the dim old one; which St Helena pretty much resembled, if what the star-gazers say of

its surface be true, all peaks and dry hollows—if, indeed, you weren't lifting up out of the world, so to speak, when one looked through his fingers right into the keen blue overhead!

"If I lived a thousand years, I couldn't tell half what I felt lying there; but, as you may imagine, it had somewhat in it of the late European war by land and sea. Not that I could have said so at the time, but rather a sort of half-doze, such as I've known one have when a schoolboy, lying on the green grass the same way, with one's face turned up into the hot summer heavens; half of it flying glimpses, as it were, of the French Revolution, the battles we used to hear of when we were children—then the fears about the invasion, with the Channel full of British fleets, and Dover Cliffs—Trafalgar and Nelson's death, and the battle of Waterloo, just after we heard *he* had got out of Elba. In the terrible flash of the thing altogether, one almost fancied them all gone like smoke; and for a moment I thought I was falling away off, *down* into the wide sky, so up I started to sit. From that, suddenly I took to guessing and puzzling closely again how I should go to work myself, if I were the strange Frenchman I saw in the brig at sea, and wanted to manage Napoleon's escape out of St Helena. And first, there was how to get into the island and put *him* up to the scheme—why, sure enough, I couldn't have laid it down better than they seemed to have done all along: what could one do but just dodge about that latitude under all sorts of false rig, then catch hold of somebody fit to cover one's landing? No Englishman *would* do it, and no foreigner but would set Sir Hudson Lowe on his guard in a moment. Next we should have to get put on the island—and really a neat enough plan it was to dog one of the very cruisers themselves, knock up a mess of planks and spars in the night-time, set them all ablaze with tar, and pretend we were fresh from a craft on fire; when even Captain Wallis of the *Podargus*, as it happened, was too much of a British seaman not to carry us straight to St Helena! Again, I must say it was a touch beyond me; but to hit the Governor's notions of a hobby, and go picking up plants round Longwood, was a likely enough way to get speech of the prisoner, or at least let him see one was there!

"How should I set about carrying him off to the coast, though? That was the prime matter. Seeing that even if

the schooner—which was no doubt hovering out of sight—were to make a bold dash for the land with the trade-wind, in a night eleven hours long—there were sentries close round Longwood from sunset, the starlight shining mostly always in the want of a moon; and at any rate there was rock and gully enough, betwixt here and the coast, to try the surest foot aboard the *Hebe*, let alone an emperor. With plenty of woods for a cover, one might steal up close to Longwood, but the bare rocks showed you off to be made a mark of. Whew! but why were those same blacks on the island? I thought; just strip them stark-naked, and let them lie in the Devil's Punch-bowl, or somewhere, beyond military hours, when I warrant me they might slip up, gully by gully, to the very sentries' backs! Their colour wouldn't show them, and savages as they seemed, couldn't they settle as many sentries as they needed, creep into the very bed-chamber where Bonaparte slept, and man-handle him bodily away down through some of the nearest hollows, before anyone was the wiser? The point that still bothered me was, why the fourth of the blacks was wanting at present, unless he had his part to play elsewhere. If it was chance, then the *whole* might be a notion of mine, which I knew I was apt to have sometimes. If I could only make out the fourth black, so as to tally with the scheme, on the other hand, then I thought it was all sure; but of course this quite checked me, and I gave it up, to work out my fancy case by providing signals betwixt us plotters inside and the schooner out of sight from the telegraphs.

“There was no use for her to run in and take the risk, without good luck having turned up on the island; yet any sign she could profit by must be both sufficient to reach sixty miles or so, and hidden enough not to alarm the telegraphs or the cruisers. Here was a worse puzzle than all, and I only guessed at it for my own satisfaction—as a fellow can't help doing when he hears a question he can't answer—till my eye lighted on Diana's Peak, near three thousand feet above the sea. There it was, by Jove! 'Twas quite clear at the time; but by nightfall there was always more or less cloud near the top; and if you set a fire on the very peak, 'twould only be seen leagues off: a notion that brought to mind a similar thing which I told you saved the Indianaman from a lee-shore

one night on the African coast—and again, by George! I saw *that* must have been meant at first by the negroes as a smoke to help the French brig easier in! Putting that and that together, why it struck me at once what the fourth black's errand might be—namely, to watch for the schooner, and kindle his signal as soon as he couldn't see the island for mist, I was sure of it; and as for a dark night coming on at sea, the freshening of the breeze there promised nothing more likely; a bright white haze was softening out the horizon already, and here and there the egg of a cloud could be seen to break off the sky to windward, all of which would be better known afloat than here.

“The truth was, I was on the point of tripping my anchor to hurry down and get aboard again, but, on standing up, the head of a peak fell below the sail I had noticed in the distance, and, seeing she loomed large on the stretch of water, I pretty soon found she must be a ship of the line. The telegraph over the Alarm House was hard at work again, so I e'en took down my glass and cleaned it to have a better view, during which I caught sight, for a minute, of some soldier-officer or other on horseback, with a mounted red-coat behind him, riding hastily up the gully a good bit from my back, till they were round the red piece of crag, turning at times as if to watch the vessel. Though I couldn't have a better spy at him for want of my glass, I had no doubt he was the Governor himself, for the sentries in the distance took no note of him.

“There was nobody else visible at the time, and the said cliff stood fair up like a lookout place, so as to shut them out as they went higher. Once or twice after, I fancied I made out a man's head or two lower down the gully than the cliff was, which, it occurred to me, might possibly be the botanists, as they called themselves, busy finding out how long St Helena had been an island; however, I soon turned the glass before me upon the ship, by this time right opposite the ragged opening of Prosperous Bay, and heading well up about fourteen miles or so off the coast, as I reckoned, to make Jamestown harbour. The moment I had the sight of the glass right for her—though you'd have thought she stood still on the smooth soft blue water—I could see her whole beam rise off the swells before me, from the dark side and white band,

checkered with a double row of ports, to the hamper of her lofty spars, and the sails braced slant to the breeze, the foam gleaming under her high bows, and her wake running aft in the heave of the sea. She was evidently a seventy-four; I fancied I could make out her men's faces peering over the yards toward the island, as they thought of 'Boneypart'; a white rear-admiral's flag was at the mizzen-royal-masthead, leaving no doubt she was the *Conqueror* at last, with Admiral Plampin, and, in a day or two at farthest, the *Hebe* would be bound for India.

"I had just looked over my shoulder toward Longwood, letting the *Conqueror* sink back again into a thing no bigger than a model on a mantelpiece, when, all at once, I saw someone standing near the brow of the cliff I mentioned, apparently watching the vessel, with a long glass at his eye, like myself. 'Twas farther than I could see to make out anything, save so much; and, ere I had screwed the glass for such a near sight, there were seven or eight figures more appearing half over the slope behind; while my hand shook so much with holding the glass so long, that at first I brought it to bear full on the cracks and blocks in the front of the crag, with the large green leaves and trailers on it flickering idly with the sunlight against my eyes, till I could have seen the spiders inside, I daresay. Next I held it too high, where the Admiral and Lord Frederick were standing by their horses, a good way back; the Governor, as I supposed, sitting on his, and two or three others along the rise. At length, what with kneeling down to rest it on one knee, I had the glass steadily fixed on the brow of the rocks, where I plainly saw a tall dark-whiskered man, in a rich French uniform, gazing to seaward—I knew him I sought too well by pictures, however, not to be sadly galled.

"Suddenly a figure came slowly down from before the rest, with his hands behind his back, and his head a little drooped. The officer at once lowered the telescope and held it to him, stepping upward, as if to leave him alone—what dress he had on I scarce noticed; but there he was standing, single, in the round bright field of the glass I had hold of like a vice—his head raised, his hands hiding his face, as he kept the telescope fixed fair in front of me—only I saw the smooth, broad round of his chin. I knew, as if I'd seen him in the Tuileries at

Paris, or known him by sight since I was a boy—I *knew* it was Napoleon!

“During that minute the rest of them were out of sight, so far as the glass went—you’d have supposed there was no one there but himself, as still as a figure in iron, watching the same thing, no doubt, as I’d done myself five minutes before, where the noble seventy-four was beating slowly to windward. When I *did* glance to the knot of officers twenty yards back, ’twas as if one saw a ring of his generals waiting respectfully while he eyed some field of battle or other, with his army at the back of the hill; but next moment the telescope fell in his hands, and his face, as pale as death, with his lip firm under it, seemed near enough for me to touch it—his eyes shot stern into me from below his wide white forehead, and I started, dropping my glass in turn. That instant the whole wild lump of St Helena, with its ragged brim, the clear blue sky and the sea, swung round about the dwindled figures above the crag, till they were nothing but so many people together against the slope beyond.

“’Twas a strange scene to witness, let me tell you; never can I forget the sightless, thinking sort of gaze from that head of his, after the telescope sank from his eye, when the *Conqueror* must have shot back with all her stately hamper into the floor of the Atlantic again!

“Once more I brought my spy-glass to bear on the place where he had been, and was almost on the point of calling out to warn him off the edge of the cliff, forgetting the distance I was away. Napoleon had stepped, with one foot before him, on the very brink, his two hands hanging loose by his side, with the glass in one of them, till the shadow of his small black cocked hat covered the hollows of his eyes, and he stood, as it were, looking down past the face of the precipice. What he thought of, no mortal tongue can say, whether he was master at the time over a wilder battle than any he’d ever fought—but just then, what was the surprise it gave me to see the head of a man, with a red tasselled cap on it, raised through amongst the ivy from below, while he seemed to have his feet on the cracks and juts of the rock, hoisting himself by one hand round the tangled roots, till no doubt he must have looked right aloft into the French Emperor’s face; and perhaps he whispered something—

though, for my part, it was all dumb show to me, where I knelt peering into the glass. I saw even *him* start at the suddenness of the thing—he raised his head upright, still glancing down over the front of the crag, with the spread hand lifted, and the side of his face half-turned toward the party within earshot behind, where the Governor and the rest apparently kept together out of respect, no doubt watching both Napoleon's back and the ship of war far beyond. The keen sunlight on the spot brought out every motion of the two in front—the *one* so full in my view, that I could mark his look settle again on the other below, his firm lips parting and his hand out before him, like a man seeing a spirit he knew; while a bunch of leaves on the end of a wand came stealing up from the stranger's post to Napoleon's very fingers.

“The head of the man on the cliff turned round seaward for one moment, ticklish as his footing must have been; then he looked back, pointing with his loose hand to the horizon—there was one minute between them without a motion, seemingly—the captive Emperor's chin was sunk on his breast, though you'd have said his eyes glanced up out of the shadow of his forehead; and the stranger's red cap hung like a bit of the bright-coloured cliff, under his two hands, holding amongst the leaves. Then I saw Napoleon lift his hand calmly, he gave a sign with it—it might have been refusing, it might have been agreeing, or it might be farewell, I never expect to know; but he folded his arms across his breast, with the bunch of leaves in his fingers, and stepped slowly back from the brink towards the officers. I was watching the stranger below it, as he swung there for a second or two, in a way like to let him go dash to the bottom; his face sluing wildly seaward again. Short though the glance I had of him was—his features set hard in some bitter feeling or other, his dress different, too, besides the moustache being off, and his complexion no doubt purposely darkened—it served to prove what I'd suspected: he was no other than the Frenchman I had seen in the brig, and, mad or sensible, the very look I caught was more like that he faced the thunder-squall with than aught besides. Directly after, he was letting himself carefully down with his back to my glass; the party above were moving off over the brow of the crags, and the

Governor riding round apparently to come once more down the hollow between us.

"In fact, the seventy-four had stood by this time so far in, that the peaks in the distance shut her out; but I ran the glass carefully along the whole horizon in my view, for signs of the schooner. The haze was too bright, however, to make sure either way; though, dead to windward, there were some streaks of cloud risen with the breeze, where I once or twice fancied I could catch the gleam of a speck in it. The *Podargus* was to be seen through a notch in the rocks, too, beating out in a different direction, as if the telegraph had signalled her elsewhere; after which you heard the dull rumble of the forts saluting the *Conqueror* down at James-town as she came in; and being late in the afternoon, it was high time for me to crowd sail downward, to fall in with my shipmates.

"I was just getting near the turn into Side Path, accordingly, after a couple of mortal hours' hard riding, and once more in sight of the harbour beneath, when the three of them overtook me, having managed to reach the top of Diana's Peak, as they meant. The first lieutenant was full of the grand views on the way, with the prospect of the peak, where one saw the sea all round St Helena like a ring, and the sky over you as blue as blue water. 'But what do you think we saw on the top, Mr Collins?' asked one of the urchins of me—a mischievous imp he was himself, too, pock-marked, with hair like a brush, and squinted like a ship's two hawse-holes. 'Why, Mister Snelling,' said I, gruffly—for I knew him pretty well already, and he was rather a favourite with me for his sharpness, though you may suppose I was thinking of no trifles at the moment—'why, the devil, perhaps.' 'I must say I thought at first it was him, sir,' said the reefer, grinning; 'twas a black nigger, though, sir, sitting right on the very truck of it, with his hands on his two knees, and we'd got to shove him off before we could dig our knives into it!' 'By the Lord Harry!' I rapped out, 'the very thing that——' 'Twas really the case, though, Mr Collins,' said the first lieutenant; 'and I thought it curious; but there are so many negroes in the island.' 'If you please, sir,' put in the least of the mids, 'perhaps they haven't all of 'em room to meditate, sir!' 'Or sent to the mast-head, eh, Roscoe?' said Snelling.

‘Which you’ll be, sirrah,’ broke in the first lieutenant, ‘the moment I get aboard, if you don’t keep a small helm.’ We were clattering down over Jamestown by this time, the sun blazing red off the horizon, into it and the doors of the houses, and the huge hull and spars of the *Conqueror* almost blocking up the harbour, as she lay anchored outside the Indiaman. The evening gun fired as we pulled aboard the *Hebe*, which immediately got under weigh by order, although Lord Frederick was not come down yet; but it fell to her turn that night to supply a guard-boat to windward, and she stood up under full sail round Sugarloaf Point, just as the dusk fell like a shadow over the island.

“The *Newcastle’s* boat was on the leeward coast that night, and one of our cutters was getting ready to lower, nearly off Prosperous Bay, to windward, while the frigate herself would hold farther out to sea. One of the master’s mates should have taken the cutter; but after giving the first lieutenant a few hints as far as I liked to go, I proposed to go in charge of her that time, myself—which was laid to the score of my freshness on the station; and the mate being happy to get rid of a tiresome duty, I got leave at once.

“The sharp midshipman, Snelling, took it into his ugly head to keep me company, and away we pulled into hearing of the surf. The moment things took the shape of fair work, in fact, I lost all thoughts of a late kind. In place of seeing the ragged heights against the sky, and musing all sorts of notions about the French Emperor, there was nothing but the broad bulk of the island high over us, the swell below, and the sea glimmering wide from our gunwale to the stars; so no sooner did we lose sight of the *Hebe* slowly melting into the gloom, than I lit a cheroot, gave the tiller to the mid, and sat stirring to the heart at the thought of something to come, I scarce knew what. As for Bonaparte, with all that belonged to him, ’twas little to me in that mood, in spite of what I’d seen during the day, compared with a snatch of old Channel times; the truth was, next morning I’d feel for him again.

“The night for a good while was pretty tolerably starlit, and in a sort of way you could make out a good distance. One time we pulled right round betwixt the two points, though slowly enough; then again the men lay on their oars, letting her float in with the long swells, till the surf

could be heard too loud for a safe berth. Farther on in the night, however, it got to be dark—below at least—the breeze holding steady, and bringing it thicker and thicker; at last it was so black all round that on one side you just *knew* the rocks over you, with the help of a faint twinkle of stars right aloft. On the other side there was only, at times, the two lights swinging at the mast-head of the *Podargus* and *Hebe*, far apart, and one farther to sea than the other; or now and then their stern-window and a port, when the heave of the water lifted them, or the ships yawed a little. One hour after another, it was wearisome enough waiting for nothing at all, especially in the key one was in at the time, and with a long tropical night before you.

“All of a sudden, fairly between the brig and the frigate, I fancied I caught a glimpse for one moment of another twinkle; then it was out again, and I had given it up, when I was certain I saw it plainly once more, as well as a third time, for as short a space as before. We were off a cove in the coast, inside Prosperous Bay, where a bight in the rocks softened the force of the surf, not far from the steep break where one of these same narrow gullies came out—a good deal short of the shore, indeed; but I knew by this time it led up somewhere toward the Longwood side. Accordingly the idea struck me of a plan to set agoing, whether I hit upon the right place or not; if it *was* the schooner, she would be coming down right from windward, on the lookout for a signal, as well as for the spot to aim at; the thing was to lure her boat ashore there before their time, seize her crew, and take the schooner herself by surprise, as if we were coming back all right; since signal the ships we couldn’t, and the schooner would be wary as a dolphin.

“No sooner said than done. I steered cautiously for the cove, fearfully though the swell bore in, breaking over the rocks outside of it; and the reefer and I had to spring one after the other for our lives, just as the bowman prized her off into the back-wash.

“As for the cutter, it would spoil all to keep her off thereabouts; and I knew, if a boat did come in of the kind I guessed, why she wouldn’t lay herself out for strength of crew. Snelling and I were well armed enough to manage half-a-dozen, if they fancied us friends; so I ordered the men to

pull clear off for an hour, at least leaving fair water. In fact there were sentries about the heights, I was aware, if they could have heard or seen us ; but the din of the surf, the dark, and the expectation of the thing, set us both upon our mettle ; while I showed the boat's lantern every now and then, like the light I had noticed, such as the Channel smugglers use every thick night on our own coast. I suppose we might have waited five or ten minutes when the same twinkle was to be caught, dipping dark down into the swell again, about opposite the cove ; next we had half-an-hour more, every now and then giving them a flash of the lantern, when suddenly the reefer said he saw oars glisten over a swell, which he knew weren't man-o'-war's strokes, or else the fellows ought to have their grog stopped. I had the lantern in my hand, slipping the shade once more, and the other to feel for my cutlass-hilt, when the mid gave a cry behind me, and I turned just in time to see the dark figure of a black spring off the stones at our backs. One after another three or four more came leaping past me out of the gloom—the Frenchman's red cap and his dark fierce face glared on me by the light of the lantern ; and next moment it was down, with him and me in a deadly struggle over it in the thick black of the night. Suddenly I felt myself lose hold of him in the heave of the swell, washing away back off the rock ; then something else trying to clutch me, when down I swept with the sea bubbling into my mouth and ears.

“ I came up above water again by the sheer force of the swell, as it seemed to me, plunging into the shore ; with the choice, I thought, of either being drowned in the dark, or knocked to a jelly on the rocks ; but out I struck, naturally enough, rising on the huge scud of the sea, and trying to breast it, though I felt it sweep me backwards at every stroke, and just saw the wide glimmer of it heave far and wide for a moment against the gloom of the cliffs behind. All at once, in the trough, I heard the panting of someone's breath near alongside of me, and directly after I was caught hold of by the hair of the head, somebody else grabbing at the same time for my shoulder. We weren't half-a-dozen fathoms from the stranger's boat, the blacks who had fallen foul of me swimming manfully together, and the boat lifting bow-on to the run of the sea, as her crew looked about for us by the

light of their lantern. I had just got my senses enough about me to notice so much, when they were hauling me aboard; all four of the negroes holding on with one hand by the boat's gunnel, and helping their way with the other; while the oars began to make for the light, which was still to be caught by fits, right betwixt those of the two cruisers, as the space widened slowly in the midst of them, standing out to sea. Scarce had I time to feel some one beside me as wet as myself, whether the reefer or the Frenchman I didn't know, when crash came another boat with her bows fairly down upon our gunwale, out of the dark.

"The spray splashed up betwixt us, I saw the glitter of the oar-blades, and heard Snelling's shrill voice singing out to 'sink the villains, my lads—down with 'em—remember the second lieutenant!' The lantern in the French boat flared, floating out for a single instant amongst a wreck of staves and heads, bobbing wildly together on the side of a wave. One of my own men from the cutter pulled me by the cuff of the neck off the crest of it with his boat-hook, as it rose swelling away past, till I had fast grip of her quarter; the blacks could be seen struggling in the hollow, to keep up their master's body, with his hands spread helplessly hither and thither above water. The poor devils' wet black faces turned so wistfully, in their desperation, towards the cutter, that I gasped out to save him. They kept making towards us, in fact, and the bowman managed to hook him at last, though not a moment too soon, for the next heave broke the unlucky wretches apart, and we lost sight of them; the cutter hanging on her oars till they had both him and me stowed into the stern-sheets, where the Frenchman lay seemingly dead or senseless, and I spitting out the salt water like a cockney after a bathe.

"'Why, Mr Snelling,' said I, as soon as I came fully to myself, 'I can't at all understand how I got into the water!' 'Nor I either, sir,' said he; 'I'll be hanged, sir, if I didn't think it was a whirlwind of niggers off the top of Diana's Peak, seeing I made out the very one we found there this afternoon—the four of them took you and this other gentleman up in their arms in a lump, as you were floundering about together, and took to the water like so many seals, sir!' I looked down into the Frenchman's face, where he

lay stretched with his head back and his hair dripping. 'Is he gone?' said I. 'Well, sir,' said the mid, who had contrived to light the lantern again, 'I'm afraid he's pretty near it. Is he a friend of yours, sir?—I thought as much, by-the-way, you caught him the moment you clapped eyes on each other, sir.' 'Silence, sirrah!' said I. 'D'ye see anything of the light to seaward?'

"For a minute or two we peered over the swells into the dark, to catch the twinkle of the signal again, but to no purpose; and I began to think the bird was flown. All of a sudden, however, there it was once more, dipping as before beyond the heave of the sea, and between the backs of it, sliding across the open space, with the blind side to the cruisers. 'Hallo, my lads!' said I, quickly, and giving myself another shake as I seized the tiller, 'give way seaward—stretch your backs for ten minutes, and we have her!' We were pulling right for the spot, when the light vanished, but a show of our lantern brought it gleaming fairly out again, till I could even catch a glimpse by it of some craft or other's hull, and the iron of one boom-end, rising over the swells. 'Bow-oar, there!' whispered I. 'Stand by, my lad, and look sharp!' 'Hola!' came a short, sharp hail over the swells, '*d'où venez-vous?*' 'Oui, oui!' I sang out boldly, through my hand, to cover the difference as much as possible; then a thought occurred to me, recollecting the French surgeon's words on board this very craft the first time we saw her—'*De la cage de l'Aigle,*' I hailed; '*bonne fortune, mes amis!*' 'C'est possible! c'est possible, mon capitaine!' shouted several of the schooner's crew, jumping upon her bulwarks, '*que vous apportez lui-même?*'

"We are pulling for her side as lubberly as possible, all the time—a man ran up on her quarter with a coil of line ready to heave—but still the main boom of the schooner was already jibbing, her helm up, and she under way; they seemed half doubtful of us, and another moment might turn the scales. 'Vite, vite!' roared I, choosing my French at hap hazard. 'Oui, oui, jetez votre corde—venez au lof, mes amis!'—luff, that was to say. I heard somebody aboard say it was the American—the schooner came up in the wind, the line whizzing off her quarter into our bows, and we came sheering down close by her lee-quarter, grinding

against her bends in the surge, twenty eager faces peering over at us in the confusion; when I sung out hoarsely to run for brandy and hot blankets, as he was half-drowned. 'Promptement—promptement, mes amis!' shouted I, and as quickly there was a rush from her bulwarks to bring what was wanted, while Snelling and I made dash up her side, followed by the men, cutlass in hand. Three minutes of hubbub, and as many strokes betwixt us, when we had driven the few that stood in our way pell-mell down the nearest hatchway. The schooner was completely our own.

"We hoisted up the cutter, with the French captain still stretched in the stern-sheet—hailed aft the schooner's head-sheets, let her large mainsail swing full again, and were soon standing swiftly out toward the light at the frigate's masthead.

"When the *Hebe* first caught sight of us, or rather heard the sound of the schooner's sharp bows rushing through the water, she naturally enough didn't know what to make of us. I noticed our first luff's sudden order to clear away the foremost weather-gun, with the rush of the men for it; but my hail set all to rights. We hove-to off her weather quarter, and I was directly after on board, explaining, as simply as possible, how we had come to get a hold of a French craft thereabouts in such a strange fashion.

"Accordingly, you may fancy the surprise at Jamestown in the morning, to see the *Hebe* standing in with her prize, let alone the Governor's perfect astonishment at suspecting some scheme to carry off *Napoleon*, apparently, so far brought to a head. The upshot of it was, to cut this bit of my story short, he and the military folks would have it, at last, that there was nothing of the kind, but only some slaver from the African coast wanting to land a cargo, especially as there were so many blacks aboard of her; and the Frenchman at once took the cue, the little Monsieur of a mate swearing he had been employed by several of the islanders some months before to bring them slaves. For my own part, all things considered, I had nothing to say, and after some likelihood of a shine being kicked up about it at first, the matter was hushed up. However, the schooner was of course condemned in the meantime, as the *Hebe's* fair prize, till such time as the Admiralty Court at the Cape should settle it on our outward-bound voyage.

"As the *Hebe* was to sail at once for India, the Governor took the opportunity to send two or three supernumeraries out in the vessel along with us to the Cape of Good Hope, amongst whom was the Yankee botanist; and though being in the frigate I didn't see him, I made as sure as if I had, it was my old shipmate Daniel.

"Well, the morning came, when we weighed anchor from St James's Bay for sea, in company with the prize. It wasn't more than ten or eleven days since we had arrived in the *Podargus*, but I was as weary with the sight of St Helena as if I'd lived there a year. The frigate's lovely hull, and her taut spars, spreading the square stretch of her white canvas sideways to the Trade, put new life into me. Slowly as we dropped the peaks of the island on our lee-quarter, 'twas something to feel yourself travelling the same road as the Indiaman once more, with the odds of a mail coach, too, to a French diligence. What chance might turn up to bring us together, I certainly didn't see; but that night, when we and the schooner were the only things in the horizon, both fast plunging, close-hauled, on a fresh breeze, at the distance of a mile, I set my mind, for the first time, more at ease. 'Luck and the anchors stowed!' thought I, 'and hang all forethoughts!' I walked the weather quarterdeck in my watch as pleasantly as might be, with now and then a glance forward at Snelling, as he yarned at the fife-rail beside a groggy old mate, and at times a glimmer of the schooner's hull on our lee-beam, rising wet out of the dusk, under charge of our third lieutenant.

"It was about a week afterwards, and we began to have rough touches of Cape weather, pitching away on cross seas, and handing our gallant-sails oftener of a night, that Lord Frederick said to me one evening, before going down to his cabin, 'Mr Collins, I really hope we shall not find your Indiaman at Cape Town, after all!' 'Indeed, Lord Frederick!' said I respectfully enough; but it was the very thing I hoped myself. 'Yes, sir,' continued he; 'as I received strict injunctions by Admiral Plampin to arrest Lieutenant Westwood if we fell in with her there, and otherwise, to send the schooner in her track, even if it were to Bombay.' 'The deuce!' I thought, 'are we never to be done with this infernal affair?' 'Tis excessively disagreeable,' continued the captain, swinging his gold eyeglass round his finger by the chain, as

was his custom when bothered, and looking with one eye all the while at the schooner. 'A beautiful craft, by-the-way, Mr Collins,' said he, 'even within sight of the *Hebe*.' 'She is so, my lord,' said I; 'if she had only had a sensible boatswain, even, to put the sticks aloft in her.' 'I say, Mr Collins,' went on his lordship, musingly, 'I think I have it, though—the way to get rid of this scrape!'

"I waited and waited, however, for Lord Frederick to mention this; and to no purpose, apparently, as he went below without saying a word more about it."

CHAPTER XXIII

"WELL, ma'am," continued our narrator, addressing himself, as usual, to his matronly relative in the chair, and with the accustomed catch-word, which was like the knotting together of his interrupted yarn: "well—it was between a fortnight and three weeks after losing sight of St Helena, that, being at last fairly in the latitude of the Cape, the frigate and schooner tacked in company, and stood close-hauled on a wind to the eastward. By the middle watch that night, when the moon set, we could make out the long flat top of Table Mountain heaving in sight off the horizon over against her. Next day, in fact, we were both of us quietly at anchor outside of the shipping in Table Bay; Cape Town glittering along on the green flat amongst the trees to southward, with the hills on each side of it like some big African lion lying on guard close by; while Table Mountain hove up, square-shouldered, blue to the left, four thousand feet high, as bare and steep as a wall, with the rocks and trees creeping up from the foot, and the wreaths of light cloud resting half-way, like nothing else but the very breakwater of the world's end. The sea stretched broad off to north and west, and a whole fleet of craft lay betwixt us and the land—half of them Indiamen—amongst which, you may be sure, I kept a pretty sharp lookout with the glass, to see if the *Seringapatam* were there still.

"I was soon saved further pains on this head, however, when shortly afterwards the frigate was beset by a whole squadron of bumboats, shoving against each other, and squab-

bling in all sorts of nigger tongues, who should be first : the chief of them being in evident command of a fat old Dutch Vrouw, with an immense blue umbrella over her, two greasy-looking Hottentot rowers in blankets, and a round-faced Dutch boy, the picture of herself, steering the boat ; as the old lady made a clear berth for herself, by laying about her with her blue umbrella, till she was close under our quarter, sitting all the while with the broad round stern of her bright-coloured gown spread over a couple of beer-barrels, like a peacock's train. In two minutes more the little fellow was up the side, flourishing a bundle of papers under the first lieutenant's very nose, and asking the ship's custom, even whilst the sentries were ordering them all off. A midshipman took this youth by the cuff of the neck, and was handing him rather roughly along to the care of the purser's steward, when I stepped betwixt them ; and a bumboat being the best directory on the point, of course, I soon found the old lady had had dealings with the *Seringapatam*, which her bluff-built little progeny described as a very good ship indeed, all having paid their bills, except one young officer, who had left a balance standing, for which he had given a letter to his brother in a ship that was to come after. As for the Indian herself, the Dutch boy said she had sailed about a week before our arrival, along with two others ; and he was anxious to know if we were the vessel in question. I accordingly unfolded the open letter, which was addressed : 'Thomas Spoonbill Simm, Esquire, of His Britannic Majesty's ship *Nincompoop* (or otherwise)' ; and it ran somehow thus :—*'Hon. East India Company's ship Seringapatam, Table Bay, September 1, 1816.—My dear Brother,—This is to certify that I have eaten four dozen and a half of eggs, supplied by the worthy Vrouw Dulcken, the bearer of this, whom I can recommend as an old screw, and am due her for the same the sum of nine shillings and sixpence sterling, which you will kindly pay her, taking her receipt or mark, unless you are willing to forfeit our family watch, herewith deposited by me in the hands of said Mother Dulcken. I may add that, in justice to the worthy Vrouw, three of the above-mentioned eggs ought to be charged as fowls, which, by-the-way, I did not consume ; and, with love to all at home, remain your affectionate brother, JOHN SIMM, H.E.I.C.S.—P.S. The watch*

I have discovered to be pinchbeck, and it does not go; so that a sad trick must have been originally played upon our venerated uncle, from whom it descended.—J. S.’

“This precious epistle was, without doubt, a joke of the fat mid Simm, who used to come such rigs over Ford the cadet, and that jumped overboard one night by mistake out of the Indiaman’s quarter-boat, during the voyage. As for the existence of his brother Thomas, or the chance of his touching at that port, I set them down with the coming home of Vanderdecken; though the thought of this young scamp of a sea-lawyer breakfasting for a fortnight so comfortably, only a few feet distant from my charmer’s state-room, sent me all abroad again, and right into the Indiaman’s decks, by this time far out of sight of land. Piece of impudent roguery though it was, I was actually loath to part with the scrawl, which the reefer had fisted, no doubt, on the lid of his chest—probably with a pipe in his mouth at the time, it smelt so of tobacco—only seven days before: I could even see the grin on his fat face as he wrote it below in the steerage, with his chin up, and his eyes looking down past his pipe; while the little Dutch boy’s round flat frontispiece glistened as he peered up at me, in the evident notion of my being the brother expected.

“In fact, ma’am, I was so soft as to intend paying the nine-and-sixpence myself, and keeping the letter, when I was startled to see the old lady herself had contrived to be hoisted on board amongst her cabbages; and having got wind of the thing, seemingly, she came waddling towards me to hand over Simm’s watch to boot. In another half-minute the letter was being read aloud in the midst of the whole gun-room officers, amongst roars of laughter; the honest old Dutchwoman holding aloft the precious article, and floundering through to find out the rightful owner, as everyone claimed it and offered the nine-and-sixpence; while for my part I tried first to get down one hatchway, then another, and Lord Frederick himself came up on the starboard side of the quarterdeck in the height of the scene. Indeed, I believe it was a joke for months after in the *Hebe*, of a night, to say it was ‘the second lieutenant’s watch’; the sole revenge I had being to leave Mother Dulcken and her boy to expect the ‘ship that was coming after.’

“A Government boat came aboard in the afternoon; and as

soon as it left us Lord Frederick took his gig and steered for a frigate lying some distance off, which had the harbour-flag hoisted at her main, being the only man-o'-war besides ourselves, and commanded by a senior captain.

"Till it got dark I could see the crews of the nearest merchantmen looking over their bulwarks at us and our prize, apparently comparing the schooner with the frigate, and speculating on her character, as she lay a few fathoms off the *Hebe's* quarter, both of us rising and falling in turn on the long heave of the Cape swell from seaward. 'Twas hard to say, in fact, so far as their hulls went, which was the most beautiful sample of its kind; though the schooner's French-fashioned sticks and off-hand sort of rigging, showed rather like jury-gear beside the tall regular sticks aloft of the *Hebe's* decks, with all her hamper perfect to a tee. The *Hebe's* men very naturally considered their own ship a model for everything that floated—a sort of a Solomon's temple, in short; and to hear the merciless way they ran down the Indiamen all round would have raised the whole homeward-bound fleet against us; whereas the schooner was our own, at any rate, and she was spoken of much in the manner one mentions an unfortunate orphan, as good as already christened by the name of the *Young Hebe*.

"This our learned chaplain said was quite improper, and he gave another name in place of it—the *Aniceta*—which meant, as he observed, the *Hebe's* youngest daughter; so the *Aniceta* she was called, happening to be a title that went, according to the boatswain, full as sweetly through the sheave-hole.

"Next day the schooner had landed not only her passengers from St Helena, but the prisoners also, as we still understood the French and their Kroomen to be. Not long after that Lord Frederick came back from Cape Town, looking grave, and went straight down to his cabin, or 'cabins,' as his lordship preferred to have it said. The first lieutenant dined that day with the captain; but they could scarcely have finished when the 'young gentlemen,' who had been as usual from the reefer's mess, came up with a message from the captain, that his lordship would be glad if I would join the first lieutenant and himself in a glass of wine. I found them sitting at the side of the table nearest the open port, with the decanters

between them, and the broad bright bay in full sight to the shore and the foot of Table Mountain, which rose up blocking the port with the top of it beyond view; the sounds of the merchantmen clicking at their heavy windlasses, and hoisting in water-casks, floated slowly in from every side, while the schooner had hauled on her cable more abreast of the frigate, leaving the sight clear over the eddy round her low counter.

“‘A lovely piece of workmanship, certainly!’ observed Lord Frederick thoughtfully, as he leant back swinging his eyeglass round his finger, with the other hand in the breast of his waistcoat, and looking out at what was seen of the schooner. ‘And how one might have improved her spars, too!’ said Mr Hall, wistfully. ‘I should have recommended longer lower-masts altogether, Lord Frederick, and a thorough overhaul, I may say, from the combings upwards!’ ‘I would not have her hull touched for the world, Mr Hall!’ said the captain; ‘tis too—excessively provoking, at least! But pass the bottles to Mr Collins, if you please.’ I had taken a chair, and quietly filled my glass, wondering what could be the matter, when his lordship turned to me and said, ‘Do you know, Mr Collins, this schooner of ours is likely to be laid up in Chancery, heaven knows how long. The Admiralty Court ashore are doubtful of condemning her, apparently, and she must either be sent home or to Monte Video, or somewhere, where the master of her claims to belong!’ ‘Indeed, my lord,’ said I, setting down my glass, ‘that is curious.’ ‘Curious, indeed, sir!’ replied he, biting his lips, ‘though, after all, we really can scarce say what she is to be condemned for—only in the meantime I sail to-morrow for India.’ ‘She’s French to the backbone, that I’ll swear, Lord Frederick!’ I said; ‘and what’s more, she was——’ ‘Ah,’ broke in the captain, ‘I know, I know; but the less we say of that, in present circumstances, the better! Once get her entangled with politics, and we may give her up altogether.’ Lord Frederick twisted his eyeglass round his forefinger faster than before, still watching the schooner; the first lieutenant held up his claret betwixt himself and the light, and I sipped mine. ‘I tell you what, gentlemen,’ exclaimed his lordship, suddenly, ‘I *must* have that schooner at any cost!—What is to be done, Mr Hall?’ ‘She’d be of great service in the China seas, my lord, certainly,’ said the

first lieutenant, looking thoughtfully into his empty glass; 'a perfect treasure for light service, especially if new sparred and——' I noticed Lord Frederick glancing sideways at me, as I thought, with a slight gleam in his eye; and accordingly I suggested that he might buy her from the Frenchman himself; a very poor idea, no doubt, as both the captain and first luff seemed to think, and we all three kept eyeing her doubtfully through the port, without a word.

"At this time the schooner's counter had been slowly sheering towards the frigate's beam, owing to the ebb-tide, and her holding only by a single cable, till her stern began to show right opposite the cabin, I should say not twenty feet off. Lord Frederick put his glass to his eye, and was peering through it, when he remarked that they had brought up rather too near, leaving scarce room for the schooner to swing as she did, earlier than we, so that she would be in danger in getting foul of the frigate's cables. 'The worst of it is, Lord Frederick,' said I, 'that in case of a gale from seaward here, she might have to slip and run upon very short warning, whereas the *Hebe* has plenty of ground-tackle to let her ride it out. Considering it was Table Bay, at this season, he ought to have kept her a clearer berth for herself, or else have gone well outside!' 'Ah!' said Lord Frederick quickly, meeting my eye for half-a-minute, till the gleam came into his again; and somehow or other mine must have caught it, though I must say the notion that struck me then all at once wasn't in my head before. 'Do you know, that's well thought of, Collins!' said his lordship. 'You've weathered the Cape before, by-the-by?' 'A dozen times, Lord Frederick,' said I; when a regularly jovial roar of laughter broke fair through the port into the cabin from the schooner's taffrail, as she sheered end-on to the frigate's quarter, and Lord Frederick leant forward with the glass screwed into his right eye to see along their decks, which were covered aft with an awning like the open gable of a tent at a fair. 'Singular!' said he; 'by the Lord Harry, who or what can that be Mr Hammond has got there?' Dangling over the French schooner's taffrail were to be seen the soles of two immense boots, with calves and knees to match, and a pair of tightish striped trousers worked up more than halfway, till you saw the tops of the

stockings; just beyond the knees was the face leaning back in the shade of the awning and a straw hat together, out of which a huge green cabbage-leaf hung like a flap over one eye, while the other kept gazing in a half-closed sleepy sort of way at the sky, and the red end of a cigar winked and glowed in the midst of the puffs of smoke lower down. The first lieutenant started up shocked at the sight, the noble captain of the *Hebe* sat with his eyeglass fixed, between amusement and wonder; for my own part, when the voice of this same prodigy broke all of a sudden on us out of the awning, in a mixture of stuttering, hiccuping, Yankee drawling, and puffs at the cigar, 'twas all I could do to hold on, with the knowledge of where I was. 'Wall now, general,' said the American, as if he were talking to someone aloft or in the sky, 'ye-you're qui-quite wrong—I ki-kick-calc'late I've fit a deal more be-be-battles than you have—I re-respect you, Ge-Ge-General Washington; but I ho-ho-hope you know who—hic—who I am!' Here Mr Daniel Snout, who was in a state of beastly intoxication, swayed himself up bodily into the schooner's taffrail, and sat with his arms folded, his long legs swinging over the stern, and his head trying to keep steady, as he scowled solemnly aloft over the frigate's mizzen-royal-masthead; while the third lieutenant, Mr Hammond, and the master's mate he had aboard with him, could be heard laughing at his back, as if they had gone mad—Hammond being a wild sprig of an Irishman, who would go any length for a piece of fun.

"Just then the American's one eye lighted on the side of the frigate, till it settled lazily on the port of the captain's cabin: first he seemed to notice Lord Frederick Bury, and then myself, the first lieutenant having just recovered himself enough to rush toward the door to get on deck. Daniel himself surveyed me scornfully for a moment, then with a sort of doubtful frown, and a gravity that passes me to describe, unless by the look of an old cock a-drinking—evidently trying to recollect me. 'Hallo, mister!' shouted he suddenly, 'you haven't touched those *notions* of mine, I hope.' With that he made a spring off where he sat, as if to come towards us—no doubt thinking of the *Seringapatam*, and the valuables he had left aboard, without seeing the water between; and a pretty deep dive Mr Snout would have made of it, into an ebb-tide

that would have swept him under the frigate's bottom, if Mr Hammond and the midshipman hadn't both sprung forward in time to catch him by the neck of the coat. There, accordingly, was the Yankee hanging like a spread eagle over the schooner's taffrail, yelling and turning round at the same time like a fowl on a spit—the third lieutenant's and the mate's faces two pictures of dismay, as they held on, at finding for the first time where the schooner had shied them round to, with their two pairs of eyes fair in front of the captain's eyeglass—while Mr Hall was singing out like thunder from the deck above us, 'The schooner ahoy!—d'ye see where you've got to, sir? Haul ahead on that cable, d'ye hear, you lubbers, and keep clear of the ship!'

"'Mr Collins,' said his lordship quietly to me, as soon as he could keep his countenance, and looking the sterner for the trouble he was put to in doing it, 'you will get your things and go aboard the schooner directly—take her in charge, sir, and send Mr Hammond back here.' 'Very well, my lord,' said I, waiting in the doorway for something more, which, from something in Lord Frederick's look, I had reason to expect, knowing it of old. 'I can only spare you a dozen of the men she has,' added he; 'but if you choose, you can send ashore at once to pick up a few makeshifts, or anything you find!' 'Ay, ay, my lord,' said I; 'the best hand for that would be Mr Snelling, if I may take him, Lord Frederick?' 'Oh, certainly,' was the answer; 'and harkye, Collins, you had better shift your berth a few cable-lengths farther off, or more, if you please.' 'One thing, my lord,' said I, stooping down to see through the port, 'I don't much like the heavy ground-swell that begins to meet the ebb, and I fancy it won't be long ere Table Mountain spreads its supper-cloth—in which case I'd consider it necessary to slip cable and run out at once, though I mightn't get in again so easily. Am I to find the frigate here again, Lord Frederick?'

'Deuce take it, man—no!' said his lordship. He turned his back to hide the evident twinkle of his eye. 'Should we part company, of course you make for the Bay of Bengal! You can't be sure of the *Hebe*, short of the Sandheads—and if not there, then opposite Fort William, at Calcutta.' 'Very good, my lord,' said I, and had made my bow to go on deck, when Lord Frederick called me back. 'By-the-by,' said he

hastily, 'about that Indiaman of yours, Collins—she is here no doubt?' 'No, Lord Frederick,' answered I, 'I believe she sailed a week ago.' 'Dear me, the deuce!' exclaimed he; 'why, I meant to have sent to-morrow to have your friend Westwood arrested and brought aboard!' I started at this, on which his lordship explained that if Westwood got to Bombay, whither the *Seringapatam* was bound, the authorities there would have news of the thing by this time, and could send him overland at once to England, which would be far worse for him than being carried to Calcutta, where his uncle the Councillor's interest might do something for him. 'The best thing you can do, Collins,' added Lord Frederick, 'if you *are* obliged to run out to sea, is to look after that Indiaman! With such a neat thing of a sea-boat under you, you might do anything you please; so cruise to windward or leeward in chase, find her out and take out Westwood bodily—lose him afterwards in the Hoogley, if you like—carry away those old spars of hers, and send up new ones—only don't lose the schooner, I beg; so good-bye to you, my dear fellow, lest we should not meet on this side the line again!' 'Good-bye, my lord!' said I cheerfully, and hurried on deck, understanding all he wanted as well as if I'd been ordered to set her jib that moment and heave up anchor. In ten minutes I was over the frigate's side, and in ten more Hammond was back in her, with the men who were to leave; while I sent my baggage below, set the hands to work shifting the schooner's berth, and by sundown we were lying beyond hail of the ship, opposite the custom-house, and a long line of a main street in Cape Town, where we could see the people, the carriages, and the Dutch bullock-carts passing up and down; while Table Mountain hove away up off the steep Devil's Hill and the Lion's Rump, to the long level line a-top as blue and bare as an iron monument, and throwing a shadow to the right over the peaks near at hand.

"Our friend from the United States being by this time in quite an oblivious condition, the first thing I did was to have him put quietly into the boat with which Mr Snelling was to go ashore for fresh hands, and I instructed the reefer to get clear of him anyhow he liked, if it was only above tide-mark. When they were gone I walked the schooner's little quarter-deck in the dusk by myself, till the half-moon rose

with a ghostly copper-like glare over the hollow in the Lion's Rump, streaking across the high face of Table Mountain, and bringing out all its rifts and wrinkles again. The land-breeze began to blow steadily with a long sighing sweep from the north-east, meeting the heavy swell that set into the broad bay; and the schooner, being a light crank little craft, got rather uneasy; whereas you could see the lights of the frigate heaving and settling leisurely, less than half-a-mile off. I had only six or seven good hands aboard altogether at the time, which, with those the midshipman had, were barely sufficient to work her in such seas; so with all I had to do, with the difficulty of getting men in the circumstances, a long voyage before us, and things that might turn up, as I hoped, to require a touch of the regular service, why the very pleasure of having a command made me a good deal anxious. Even of that I didn't feel sure; and I kept watching Table Mountain, eager for the least bit of haze to come across the top of it, as well as sorry I had sent Snelling ashore. 'I'd give a hundred pounds at this moment,' thought I, 'to have had Bob Jacobs here!'

"As the moon got higher, I could see the swell washing up between the different merchantmen in sight, into their shadows, and heavy enough some of them seemed to roll round their cables, betwixt a breeze and a swell running the contrary ways; first one let go a second anchor, and then another, to help their heads shoreward; but still there was no danger, as things went. It wasn't long before I made out two boats coming from toward the town, round the stern of one of the ships, the frigate lying betwixt her and us, so that they took her by the way, and a good deal of hailing seemed to pass between them. I could even see epaulets glisten over the *Hebe's* quarter, as if there was a stir made aboard; after which the boats were plainly pulling for the schooner. What all this might mean I couldn't very well conceive, unless it were either Snelling come back already, or else some hands Lord Frederick himself had provided before this, as I saw both boats were full of people. 'Forward there!' I sung out, 'hail those boats.' 'Ay, ay, the schooner ahoy!' was the answer in a sharp voice from the headmost of them, 'from the shore—all right! Stand by to heave us a line, will ye?' Next came a hail from Snelling, in our own gig;

so I at once gave orders to heave them a rope and have both boats brought under the gangway, naturally supposing the sharp little fellow had come some marvellous good speed in shipping hands. As soon as he jumped on deck, I accordingly inquired how many men he had brought, when to my great surprise he informed me there was only one, 'a scuffy sort of a swab,' as he expressed it, 'who would do for cook!' 'The devil he will! you young rascal,' I broke out.

" 'Hush, sir, for heaven's sake,' said he, making some extraordinary sign, which I didn't understand; 'it'll all be right in the end, Mr Collins. Now then, sir,' to someone in the boat alongside, as he carefully handed him the accommodation-ropes, 'here you are—hold on, sir—so-o!' This was a rather youngish fellow in a huge pilot-coat and a glazed cap, with some kind of uniform inside, and a large breastpin in his shirt, who handed me a paper the moment he stood firm on deck, without speaking a word; though, by the light of the deck-lantern, I didn't much like the look of his foxy sort of face, with the whiskers on it coming forward from both cheeks to his mouth, nor the glance he gave round the schooner with his pair of quick sharp little eyes. 'Much more like a custom-house officer than a cook!' thought I, 'unless we mean to have a French one'; but what was my astonishment, on opening the paper, to find him called 'Gilbert Webb, harbour master's assistant, hereby authorised by the Admiralty Court, sitting in Cape Town, to take charge of the doubtful vessel described in her papers as the *Ludovico*, belonging to Monte Video—from the officer commanding the prize crew of his Britannic Majesty's ship *Hebe*.' My first thought was to have Mr Gilbert Webb pitched over into his boat again, when Lord Frederick's own signature met my eye at the bottom of the paper, addressed below to 'Lieutenant Collins of His Majesty's schooner *Aniceta at sea*.'

"A wonderfully mysterious squint from Snelling, behind the officer, was sufficient to clinch the matter in my own mind, showing that the reefer was as sharp as a needle; and I handed back the document to the harbour gentleman, with a 'Very well, sir, that will do.' 'I suppose I'd better have my men up, Lieutenant Collins?' said he, with a quick pert kind of accent, which made me set him down at once for a Londoner,

while at the same time he seemed impatient, as I thought, to get the management. 'Why, sir,' said I, 'I suppose you had.'

"Hereupon up mounted four or five decent enough looking *stevedores**—one or two of whom had rather the air of sailors, the rest being broad-beamed, short-legged Dutchmen, with trousers like pillow-slips—followed by a whole string of fourteen or fifteen Indian Lascars, their bundles in their hands, and an ugly old *serdug* at their head; while a lame, broken-down, debauched-like fellow of a man-o'-war's-man, that Snelling had found sitting on a timberhead ashore, got aboard with our own boat's crew. Our gangway was choke-full, to my fresh dismay, for, to get rid of such a tagrag-and-bobtail, in case of running to sea, was impossible; even if they weren't odds against us, here was it likely to get a thick night, the swell growing under the schooner till she began to jerk at her anchor, head to wind, like a young filly at a manger; so that dropping them back into their boat when needful, as I intended at first, was out of the question for the present. I found from the harbour officer that the number of hands would all be required with the morning tide, when his orders were to have the schooner towed in opposite the Battery Dock, especially as there was much chance of the wind blowing strong from seaward next day. The swell on the water, he said, was such that, after putting off, he thought of going back again till the tide began to turn; if he had not been encouraged to stick to it and keep on by the midshipman, whom he fell in with near the quay. This piece of news was the finish to the rage I felt brewing in me, vexed as I naturally was to give up the notion of a free cruise, in command of a craft like the schooner; and as soon as Mr Webb was comfortable in the cabin, over a tumbler of stiff grog and some cold beef, I sent for Snelling to my own cupboard of a state-room.

"'You cursed unlucky little imp, you!' I burst out, the moment he made his appearance, 'what's the meaning of this, sirrah, eh?' 'What is it, if you please, sir?' said Snelling, pretending to hold down his shock-head like a frightened schoolboy, and looking up all the time both at me and the lamp at once, while he swayed with the uneasy heave of the

* Men employed in the stowing of ship's cargoes.

deck in such a way as made me grip him by the arm in a perfect fury, fancying he had got drunk ashore. 'You young blackguard, you!' said I, shaking him, 'didn't I tell you to get hands—didn't you know I meant to—to——' 'Oh yes, Mr Collins,' gasped the reefer, 'I did indeed—you meant to cut and run—I saw it by your eye, sir, and—don't shake me any more, sir, or you'll spoil my hair—and I don't deserve it—it's—all right!' And on my letting him go, the ugly little scamp sunk down on a chair with his eyes starting from his head, and a leer like a perfect demon incarnate: but so perfectly laughable it was, not to mention the air of complete confidence between us that he threw into it, that I sat down myself, ready to grin at my bad luck. 'Well, Mister Snelling,' said I quietly, 'you *are* a touch beyond me! Let's have the joke, at least—out with it, man, else another shake may be——'

"The reefer pointed with his thumb over his shoulder to the cabin, shoved his chin forward, and whispered, 'Why, sir, I'm only doubtful whether you could make him third officer—but at any rate, he'll always be useful at a rope, Mr Collins—won't he, sir?' I gave Snelling one look, meant to be as grave as an Old Bailey chaplain's, but it wouldn't do—my conscience wouldn't stand it—in fact the very self-same notion seemed to me to have been creeping into my mind. 'You—young—rascal!' was all I could manage to say, before making bolt to go on deck. 'By-the-by, Mister Snelling,' said I, turning and looking down from the hatchway, 'you must want a glass of grog—tell the boy to let you have some—and go and keep the officer company, sir.'

"By this time it was raining hard, the half-moon coming out at moments and shining through it with a sudden sharp gleam, in some gust of the wind off the land—showing the swell in as far as the wet white custom-house and the bare quays, the ships with their hazy lights all hither and thither, while Table Mountain was to be seen now and then peering half over the mist, first one corner and then another, of a colour like dead ashes. One time I looked down toward the dusky little cabin, where the midshipman, quite in his element, was sitting with the harbour officer, the lamp jerking and making wild swings betwixt them, while Snelling evidently egged on his companion to drink; then I gave a glance sea-

ward, where there was nothing but a glimmer of rain and spray along the dark hollows of the water.

"I couldn't make up my mind, all I could do—it was too barefaced a thing to slip from the roadstead with a breeze blowing off-shore; but the worst of it was, that I didn't feel easy at the idea of parting with an anchor in the circumstances, not to say carrying off the Government people, unless forced to it. I accordingly went below to mix myself a stiffener, and found the officer a cool head, for, in spite of all Snelling could do, the reefer himself had got provoked, whereas the sharp Mr Webb was only a little brisker than before. 'A rough sort of night,' said I, nodding to him, as I knocked the water out of my cap. 'Well, it seems,' said he, free and easy. 'S'pose I go on deck then, gentlemen—I've refreshed, I assure you, so you needn't trouble about this 'ere schooner no farther—glad to get quit of it and turn in, I desay lieutenant?' 'No trouble in the world, Mr Webb,' said I, going on with my mixture, 'far from it; but sit down a minute, pray, sir—Mr Snelling here will take charge of the deck for us in the meantime'; and Snelling vanished at once, Mr Webb apparently flattered at my wishing his company. 'Will that cable of yours hold, think ye, Lieutenant Collins?' asked he, filling up another glass. 'Why,' said I, almost laughing, 'to tell you the truth, I begin to feel rather doubtful of it.' 'What!' broke out the harbour officer, starting up, 'then I must 'ave another put down immediately: why, what's the effect, sir—we'll be carried out to sea!' 'You said it exactly, Mr Webb,' I said: 'twould have been much worse, I suppose, if we were driven ashore, though! Now look you, if I were to let go a second anchor at present, I couldn't light upon a better plan either to break her back or lose both anchors in the end, from the difference of strain on the two cables with this ground-swell. The fact is, my good fellow, you're evidently not fit to take charge at present.'

"'What, lieutenant!' said he, looking fierce and foolish at the same time, 'here's strange lang'age to a Gov'ment officer, sir; I hask the meanin' of it *at once*, mister!' 'But I depend a good deal on your knowledge of Table Bay weather,' I continued, leaning back with my weather eye screwed to bear upon him. 'D'ye think this wind likely to moderate soon, sir? come now.' 'No,' replied he sulkily, 'I'm sure it won't;

and to-morrow it's certain to blow back ten times worse.' 'Then, Mr Webb,' said I, rising, 'you oughtn't to have come aboard to-night; as the short and the long of it is, I shall get the schooner an offing the first possible moment!' The officer stared at me in a bewildered manner; and as for the schooner, she seemed to be bolting and pitching in a way worse than before, with now and then a plunge of the swell on her broad-side, as if she had been under weigh. Suddenly Snelling lifted the skylight-frame and screamed down into the cabin: 'Mr Collins, Mr Collins! she's been dragging her anchor for the last ten minutes, sir!'

"I sprang on deck at two bounds; the schooner had somehow or other got her anchor out of hold at the time, with the cable as taut as a fiddle-string. It was quite dark aloft, and not a vestige of Table Mountain to be seen, though the moonshine, low down to westward, brought out two or three tracks of light along the stretch of water, and you saw the lights in the ships slowly sweeping past. Where we happened to be, it blew two ways at once, as is often the case in Table Bay, round the bluffs of the mountain, and as soon as she brought up again with a surge at the windlass, the heave of a long swell took her right on the quarter, lifting her in to her anchor again with a slack of the hawser, at which every second man sung out to 'hold on!' Over she went to port, a sea washing up the starboard side, and throwing a few dozen bucketfuls at once fair into the companion, where our friend the harbour officer was sticking at the time; so down plumped Mr Webb along with it, and the booby hatch was shoved close after him, while the poor devils of Lascars were huddled together as wet as swabs in the lee of the caboose forward. 'A hand to the wheel!' shouted I, as soon as I recovered myself; when to my great surprise I saw Snelling's new hand, poor creature as I'd thought him, standing with a spoke in each fist, as cool and steady as possible, and his eye fixed on me in the true knowing way which I felt could be trusted to. 'Jib there!' I sung out, 'see all clear to run up a few hanks of the jib—stand by to cut the cable at the bitts!' 'Ay, ay, sir,' answered Snelling, who was working away with the harbour men, his bare head soaked, and altogether more like an imp than a young gentleman of the navy—'all's clear, sir.'

"Five minutes I daresay we stood, everyone in the same

position, while I waited for a good moment in the run of the swell looking into the binnacle; till she hung slack, as it were, in a wide seething trough of the sea, when I signed to the man behind me to put the helm gradually to starboard. I glanced at the fellow again, caught his sharp weatherly eye once more—then putting both hands to my mouth I sung out to bowse on the jib-halliards. ‘Now—cut—the cable!’ shouted I, springing forward in my anxiety.

“The schooner rose away from her anchor on the heavy roll of the sea; I saw two quick strokes of the axe on the instant, and she was spinning head off from the wind, heeling over betwixt the force of it and the ground-swell together, while the mass of black water was washing bodily away with us; the new helmsman showing down below me he as leant to the wheel, like somebody at the foot of a slide. If he had’nt helped her at the moment with a back turn of the spokes to port, ’twould have been all up with us. As it was, the schooner fell off gallantly in his hands, with a sliding surge into the lee of the next swell, that buried her sharp bows in the green sea till it foamed about our very shoulders as we hung on like grim death to the weather bulwark. She was just shaking herself free, and rising like a buoy over the broad tops of the waves, when Snelling, myself, and two or three of the men staggered down to her mainmast to swing up the throat-halliards, letting her feel a little of the boom mainsail; and we had scarce belayed, as the last glimpse of the frigate’s lights was caught astern of us, heaving and setting, as she rode with her two bower anchors down; we had driven past close enough to have heard the creak of her hamper aloft. After that I had the fore-staysail set on her, then the reefed mainsail, and the lively schooner yielded to the long rolling seas so well, as very soon to make her own weather of it, especially since—clear of the high land about Table Bay—it was blowing only a strong breeze; and the more I began to feel master of her, the more inclined I was to let her show her good qualities.

“Such a craft I never had had the full management of before in my life; and you may easily fancy how I felt at dividing the hands into the two watches, giving little Snelling command of one, as first mate, and picking out our men in turn. I looked round amongst mine, rather at a loss for one

to make a second mate for the cruise, though there were three prime enough man-o'-war's-men, and I had chosen one of the Government officer's gang for his activity. As for the Lascars, we slumped in half of the number to each of us, for make-weights—when Snelling's fresh hand, who had fallen to my share, caught my eye again as he stood at the wheel. Every half-spoke he gave the schooner told; she was topping the heavy seas as they rose, and taking them just where they melted one to the other, with a long floating cleave that carried her counter fairly free of the after-run, though nearly right before the wind: the main-boom had been guyed over to the lee-quarter, till a third of the sail hung clear of her hull, and the breeze swept into the hollow of it, thick with spray. The light from the little binnacle shone up distinctly on the man's face, and with all the desperate, used-up, marbled sort of look of it, like one getting the better of a long spree ashore, I thought there was something uncommonly promising about him, not to say greatly above the run of foremast men. The wet, the wind, and the work he was at took off the seediness of his clothes; even the old rag of a handkerchief round his hairy neck had got a gloss to it, and he stood handling the wheel with a strange mixture of recklessness and care, as he glanced from the compass to the gaff of the mainsail against the scud, and down again.

"The very contrast between the man's manner and his outward rig was sufficient to strike one, though plenty of seamen are to be found in the like state ashore; but what fixed me to him above all was the expression in those two keen, searching, *living* eyes of his, when they once or twice met mine on their way from aloft to the compass-boxes. 'Twas as if they'd woke up since he came aboard out of a sleepy, maudlin condition, with the 'blue-devils,' or scarce fully out of 'em; like a sick man's in the lull of a fever, suddenly seen watching you out of the dusk of the bed, when one happens to glance up from the nurse's seat.

"'What's your name, my man?' asked I, stepping aft to the binnacle. 'My name is Jones, sir,' said he readily. 'And your first name?' I said. 'Jack,' was the answer in an off-hand way, with a hitch of one shoulder, and a weather-spoke to the wheel; spoken in an accent you'd have expected more in a West-End drawing-room than from a common sailor.

‘Ah,’ said I sharply. ‘Jack Jones? I wonder how many Jack Joneses there are afloat! An able seaman, I think, Jones?’ ‘Why, sir,’ replied the man, ‘I never rate myself, sir—’tis all one to me, able, ordinary, landsman, or boy—I carry no papers, and leave my betters to rate me.’ ‘Where were you last, my man?’ I asked; whereupon I met such a cool, steady, deep look out of the fellow’s strange light-coloured eyes, bloodshot as they were with drinking, that I felt almost our very two souls jostle in it; as much as to say: ‘To all eternity fathom me if you can!’ ‘Well, I forget where, sir,’ said he, lowering his look to the compass-box again; ‘always the way with me after a trip, a cruise, a voyage, or whatever it may be. I’ve got—ha!’ and he yielded his body coolly to a jerk of the schooner’s wheel. ‘A sweet craft this, sir, but a little ticklish!’ ‘You’ve got what?’ said I, not unwilling to wear out the time. ‘I’ve got—no memory!’

“Still there was somewhat so gloomy and mournful in the next glance aloft, I don’t know how it was, but I felt inclined to offer him a mate’s place on trial, and so I hinted, if he knew half as well how to handle a craft as he did of steering her. To my own surprise, Jones’s wonder didn’t seem to be roused at the notion, except that he gave me another quick glance, from head to foot, with a queer smile that struck me as if I were being questioned, instead of *him*; then he looked down over his own outfit, judging by which you’d have said he’d been shipwrecked. ‘Well,’ said I, ‘I daresay you’ve been hard put to it, somehow, Jones—so as soon as you leave the wheel, you can go below to the steward, and get a sea-going suit of my own, till we see Calcutta, when your mate’s wages will set you all right again.’ The man touched his battered old straw hat; but I noticed his eyes gleam for a moment by the binnacle light, and a strange twitch run round his mouth at the mention of the mate’s wages, the only way I could account for it at the time being his late hard-up condition; and nothing to my mind was more deucedly pitiable than to see the thought of a few paltry additional rupees light up a head like that, with the glistening sort of expression of a miser as I fancied.

“The man had a head on him, in fact, when you eyed him, fit for a gentleman’s shoulders, or more—his hair and his

whiskers curly and dark, dragged though they were with the rain, not to say Cape Town mud—while the wearing away of the hair about the temples, and the red grog-streaks in the veins of his face, made him, no doubt, a dozen years older to appearance than he was. For my part I was quite convinced already, this same Jack Jones hadn't been sent out a cabin boy; there was not only a touch of high blood in him at bottom, but I'd have sworn he had been some time or other in the place of a gentleman, afloat or ashore, though plainly now 'going to the devil.'

"Meanwhile the breaking look of the clouds away on our larboard bow showed it wasn't far off dawn; so, sending another hand to the wheel, and finding a snug spot under a stern-grating for a snooze on deck, I told Jones to begin with taking charge of the deck for me. 'One thing, sir,' said he, touching his hat again, as I lay down, 'I've only shipped for the outward voyage, and leave at the first port.' 'Why, what!' said I, lifting my head; 'what do you mean to do there, eh?' 'I—I want to go ashore,' answered he, eagerly; 'ay, if we're years on the cruise, so much the better, sir, but so soon as she drops anchor off Calcutta, I'm my own master?' 'Have your own way, then,' said I; 'at any rate I'll try you in the meantime—so Mister Jones, let's see how you mind the schooner till eight bells!' Whereupon I turned myself over to sleep, and it was as broad daylight as we had any likelihood of about the Cape, when I woke.

CHAPTER XXIV

"IT still blew a stiff breeze, but the waves rose with a length and a breadth in them you find in no other sea; deep-blue sparkling hills of water, with green gleams about the crests, of which every single wave had a hundred or so; and a long seething, simmering, glassy hollow of a still valley between, where the flecks of foam slid away glittering out of the shadow. But, oh! it was glorious to feel the schooner rising quietly in the trough, with the mount of a wave, to the very ridge of it; then with a creak of all her timbers and bulkheads below, a slight shake to windward, and a jerk at

her bows, lean over to leeward again, and go hissing through the breast of a huge sea, till you thought she 'd go down into it; while there she was, however, lifting head up, with a swift flash of her cutwater, on the cross half-wave that joined every first and third one—'billow' and 'sea,' as you may say. The breeze having drawn more easterly toward morning, Jones had braced her more upon a wind, with reefed main and foresails, and fore-staysail set, which brought out the *Aniceta's* weatherly qualities to a marvel, as, notwithstanding almost a head-wind and a swelling sea, she went nearly as fast as the frigate would have done before the breeze, and not a sign of the land was to be seen from her cross-trees.

"It was not till the afternoon, when the midshipman and I had both been busy together seeing various things done about the rigging, as well as having preventer-braces and guys clapped on the booms and gaffs, that we had time to look about us; the schooner still driving along with the breeze strong abeam, and a floating plunge from one wide dark-blue sea to another, as if they handed her onward.

"Jones had got himself made decent below, as I told him, till what with different clothes, and a shave together, besides refreshment from sea weather, he was quite a different man to look at. Even Snelling owned to his sailor-like appearance, though rather surprised at my notion of making him a mate; while as for the men, they didn't know but he had come aboard as such, and to tell the truth, he was having the main-staysail got up and ready to bend at the time, like one accustomed to give orders. By this time I remembered the harbour officer, Webb, whom we'd carried off so uncereemoniously, and found he was still in his 'bunk' below, half-sulky and half-sick, consoling himself with brandy and water till we should get into Table Bay again, as he said. 'Only put him into my watch, Mr Collins,' said Snelling gravely, 'and I'll work him up, sir.' The reefer himself, in fact, had all of a sudden turned out in a laughingly dignified style, to meet his new post—in full midshipman's rig, dirk and all, with his cocked hat which I sent him down immediately to change; but he had brushed up his mop of hair, and begun to cultivate the down on his upper lip; while being a deep-shouldered, square-built, short-armed little fellow, as muscular as a monkey, you'd have thought from the back of his coat

he was a man cut shorter, and for his face, he had contrived to put such a sour effect into it—meant for great experience, no doubt—that it was only by his eyes one saw he was a boy of sixteen or so; and *they* were brimful of wild glee, as he jumped about wherever he was needed, doing the work of a couple of ordinary men, and actually delighted when a spray came over the weather bulwarks on top of him, seeing that, instead of the frigate, she was ‘our schooner’ that did it.

“‘I think she walks, Mr Collins!’ observed Snelling, holding up his head stiffly, and looking aloft as we went aft, after shaking ourselves from one of these same sprays. ‘No denying that, Mr Snelling,’ said I as gravely; ‘I only wish your fond parents could see you just now, first mate of such a smart craft, Mr Snelling!’ His father was a country baronet, who had sent him off to sea with an allowance—I daresay because his looks were no ornament, and there were plenty more coming, though Snelling always pretended his worthy progenitor was an old man. ‘Fond, be blowed!’ said he, starting; ‘I just see him at this moment at the foot of that blessed old mahogany, proposing my health before the ladies go, and——’ Here the schooner rose on a sharp, short wave, making a plunge through it that sent the helmsman swinging to the lee-side of the wheel, while a sea washed up over her forecastle, and away aft with the tubs, buckets, and spars, knocking everybody right and left. Snelling and I held on by the weather main-rigging with our feet in a bath, till she lifted bodily through it, careering to her lee-gun’ale.

“‘By George, though!’ broke out the reefer, smacking his lips as we drew breath, ‘I wish he *did* see me—wouldn’t it cheer his declining years, when I got to hand the governor carefully below! And such a rough night as we’re going to have of it, too, sir!’ ‘You unfilial young dog,’ said I; ‘but so I’m afraid we shall—and no joke either!’ Jones was standing near us, watching the looks of the weather, with evident uneasiness, and I asked him what he thought of it. ‘In my opinion, sir,’ said he, ‘you’ll have some pretty sudden shift of wind ere long, of a kind I have seen more than once off the Cape before—and that as furious as a south-easter ordinarily is hereabouts. Look away yonder, sir!’

“It had got to a clear, dry north-easterly gale that shook our canvas every time she lifted, singing through the ropes,

and bitter cold. Long and heavy as the roll of the sea was, the sky was as keen and clear as glass all round about and aloft, save the mist kicked up by the spray off a wave here and there. If a rag of white cloud appeared, it was blown away, and you saw the black wrinkled side of one wave at a time, a mile wide, you'd have said, freckled all over with spots of foam, and its ridge heaving against the eye of the blast. The waves had begun to break shorter. The schooner, buoyant as she was, and sharp as a dolphin, pitched and rolled at times like mad, and the men forward were standing by to let go the fore-halliards, throat and peak, to ease her a little; when Jones pointed out the bank of gray cloud ahead of us, scarce to be seen through the troughs of the water, except when she lifted well upon a swell of sea. The sun going down in a wild red glare to leeward of us, threw a terrible glitter across the huge slant of one single wave, that rose stretching away far and wide from her very bow, then brought out the sulky wrinkled blue in it; the hissing green crests curled over to the very sunset, as it were, while we sank slowly into the long dark lulling trough, and saw the broken shaft of a rainbow stand glimmering for a moment or two into a black hollow right ahead, when the gale drove it back upon us like an arrow, as the schooner surged through the breast of the next wave. I looked from Snelling to the new mate, who still held on by a belaying-pin and watched the clouds, giving me back a glance that showed he thought the matter more serious than ordinary. 'The sooner we strip her to the storm-staysails,' said I quickly, as we fell into the trough again, 'the better, I think. If it blows harder, we must lie-to with her at once.' My eye was anxiously fixed on Jones, for large as the schooner was, between two and three hundred tons, yet no craft in the world is so nice to bring to the wind in a gale with a heavy sea running. Scudding before it might have done for the frigate, with her full bows, and spars high enough to keep her main-topsail full in spite of the troughs; but even that would have taken us out of our course after the Indiaman. Besides that, to tell the truth, I didn't sufficiently understand fore-and-aft rigged craft in all weathers yet, to be quite sure of what I did at a pinch like the present. 'Yes, yes, sir,' answered he; 'but if you'll take an older man's advice, before that you'll wear her round

on the other tack to it. We've the worst to come, or else I'm mistaken, sir.' 'You're accustomed to schooners?' asked I firmly, and gazing him in the face.

I saw his lips open in the sweep of the wind through our after-rigging, and he made a sign with his hand, while a gnawing sort of spasm, as it were, shot through the muscles of his jaw, and for a moment he gave me a fierce, keen glance, almost a glare, from under his strong straight eyebrows—then turned away. 'Take the trumpet then, Mr Jones,' said I, singing out into his ear; 'I'll leave her to you, sir. Mr Snelling, let's see the hatches all fast!' And we scrambled along by the belaying-pins.

"'Are you all ready fore and aft?' came Jones's voice like thunder in the next dip she made, and he leapt up bareheaded on the breech of one of the small carronades aft, holding on with one hand by the weather mainshrouds, and watching the run of the waves as they glimmered off our lee-beam into the dusk, for full five minutes. I had hold of a rope near him, and his eye was as steady as if he were picking out hills in a view. I had full confidence in the man; but I must say it was a nervous moment to me, when I saw him lift the trumpet to his mouth—and furiously as the wind shook the schooner, you heard his hoarse cry, 'Put your helm up—slack off the mainsheet—brail up the mainsail—ease down the weather boom-guy—main-staysail sheet.' And the rest was lost in the wild shriek of the north-east gale. We were hard at it, however, staggering as we hauled and held on, even to the poor half-drowned, terrified Lascars, whom the midshipman had roused out of the caboose and long-boat, shoving the ropes into their leathery hands. But I knew little else till I saw the schooner had payed off before the wind, shearing with a hiss like red-hot iron right through the ridge, betwixt two tremendous combing waves. It swelled green over her larboard bulwark as she heeled over, and she gave a heavy dead lurch with it, as if she would let the next sea break aboard.

"'Now! now!' shouted Jones, at a pitch of voice like no earthly sound; 'aft the mainsheet, for your lives!' He jumped to the wheel himself, at a single bound. We were in two floundering heaps, as we dragged at the mainboom aft, and the head-sheets on the forecastle, while she came trembling

up in the long bight of the sea, and took the gale steadily before her other beam. It was blowing harder than ever; and the awful 'scud' of the sea rolled her bodily away, as she met it with her weather-bow, washing white over the head-rail, with spray from cathead to bowsprit; the gale heaving her down on the lee-beam till she plunged to the brim on that side, at every forward pitch, so that all hands on deck had to keep crowded together aft. Still it was keen starlight overhead, the gale dry, though it was bitter cold, and the seas long and pretty regular. The schooner behaved wonderfully, being as tight as a bottle; and at the same time we were not only lying our course either for the Mozambique or Indian Ocean, but instead of running farther into the gale, as before, and getting more into the wild Cape latitudes, why, at present she tended to clear out of them. I accordingly agreed with Jones to hold on with everything as long as possible, in spite of the way she was sometimes flung off with the crest of a wave, as it were, making a clear dive with her nose under water through a white seething sea that seemed to swell round the whole horizon; the black bank of cloud off our weather-beam towered like icebergs against the cold green sky to south-east, the stars glittering and twinkling over it, with little hazy rings round them, after a fashion that one of us liked no more than the other.

"About midnight, we had got everything off her to the two small storm-staysails, main and fore, the wind blowing great guns, and the half-moon shining right over the long bank, as if the back of it were dead white; while betwixt it and the washing glimmer of moonlight halfway you'd have thought the black heave of the ridges vanished into a bulk of shadow ten times blacker, save for the heads of spray tossing dimly over in it here and there. All at once, in the very height of the gale, as the black floating clouds from the bank began to cross over the gray scud flying fast aloft, a blue flash of lightning shot zigzag into the very comb of a wave ahead of us, then came the clap of thunder, loud enough to be heard above the wind, and in half-a-minute there was a sudden lull. You saw the fleecy rags of scud actually settling together under the dark vapour moving above them, and heard nothing but the vast washing welter of the billows rising and seething for miles round, as if the world were water, while the schooner

rolled helplessly away, with her storm-staysails flapping, into the trough. The midshipman almost gasped as he looked to me—not from fear, but as much as to say, ‘What next?’ Our strange mate stood against the fife-rail of the mainmast, apparently too intent on the sky and sea for speaking. For my own part, I let go my belaying-pin, and half-tumbled to the wheel, almost knocking the sailor down in my haste to put the helm hard up—for I saw how the blast was to come, fairly before the beam, upon us. ‘Hard a-starboard with it!’ shouted I; ‘haul down the main-staysail there—let her fall as she rises.’

“The last words were never heard, for next moment there was another flash of lightning, this time a blaze all round into the troughs of the sea; I saw a body of mist coming down upon us from south-east, through which the gale struck her on the starboard beam, having suddenly shifted eight points or so. The heavy rolling swell from north-east was close aboard, and as soon as I knew what I was about, here she was leaning over to the full tremendous force of the storm, without power to surge ahead, though struggling to rise like a cart-horse down on his knees with a load uphill of him. ‘Twas by instinct, as they say, I found myself scrambling along to her weather main-channels, where I managed to get out on the side, slippery as it was, and drenched with the blinding showers of spray. I had got my knife at work, cutting the lanyards of the shrouds to let the mainmast go, when I saw Snelling creep after me, like a fearless little fellow as he was, dirk in hand; although what was come of Jones I couldn’t see, unless he had lost heart and skulked. All at once, to my great joy, the main-staysail blew inway to leeward out of the bolt-ropes, like a scrap of paper, the main-topmast crashed at the cap and went alongside, when the schooner righted to her keel, with a wild bolt forward through the whole width of an immense wave—one of the ‘third waves’ it was, commonly the last and the hugest in a single roll of the sea off the Cape, before you sink into a long gliding valley, with a sort of a lull in it. The scene was so terrible at the moment, though we bore up for full half-a-minute to the fair steady stroke of the awful gale, nothing but a yeast of mist, scud, and darkness ahead, the spray torn off the ridge of the wave and flying with us, while the triple run of the heavy seas astern was in danger

of sweeping her decks from over the poop—that I felt we must try lying-to with her at once.

“Indeed, Snelling and I hardly knew whether we were holding on or not, as we were half washed inboard and half crawled round the rigging; but Jones had already seized the exact point—when she sank in the hollow—to have the helm eased down to leeward. Meanwhile he had got the reefed foresail balanced and set, with the sheet hauled aft beforehand—a tackle hooked on to the clue, and bowsed amidships—everything else was off her; and with this sail she came slowly up close to the wind on the slant of the next wave, lying-to nearly head toward the force of the sea, as her helm was kept fast two or three points to leeward. I never had seen a craft, of the kind hove-to in a gale before, and a very nice matter it is, too. We drew breath, scarce able to credit our eyes, while the schooner rode apparently safe on a sea rolling mountain-high; rising and falling off from the breasts to the sides of the waves, so far as leeway went, and forging ahead a little at the same time through the fierce spray that showered out of the dark over her weather-bow.

“Cape weather as bad I had seen before, but always in good-sized ships; and I owed to Snelling I would rather have handled any one of them, even with a lee-shore near, ten times over, than this schooner of ours in the present case. However, none of us were in any mood for speaking at the time, let alone the waste of breath it was. The best thing we had to do, after getting somewhat satisfied of her weathering it this way, was to have the grog served out to the men, swig off a stiff pannikin oneself, and make oneself as comfortable as possible with his pea-coat in the lee of something.

“The sight of the sea ridging up with a dim glimmer against the dark, kept your eye fixed to it; first you thought it would burst right aboard, crash down upon the decks; then she lifted with it, swelling broad under her, while the long steady sweep of the gale drove just over the bulwarks with a deep moan; for half-a-minute, perhaps, a shivering lull, when you heard the bulkheads and timbers creak and strain below from stem to stern, and the bilge-water yearning, as it were, to the water outside. Then, again, it was a howl and a shriek, a wide plunge of sea bore up her weather-bow, and the moment ere she came fairly to, one felt as if the schooner

were going to pitch God knows where. Her whole bulwarks shook and shivered, the wind found out every chink in them, whistling round every different rope it split upon, while all the time the loose, wet, dreary spars behind the long-boat kept slatting and clattering against each other in the lashings, like planks in a woodyard of a November night. This was the way we stuck till the morning watch showed it all in a drizzling, struggling sort of half-light, blowing as hard as ever, the Cape seas rolling and heaving mountain-high, of a pale yeasty hue, far and wide to the scud; the spray drifting from the crests, and washing over her bare forecastle, with now and then the white wings of a huge albatross to be seen aslant to windward, riding on the breast of a long wave down into the trough.

"Well, the whole blessed day did this sort of thing continue, only varied by now and then a huger sea than ordinary lifting close aboard of us, and we being hove up to get a glimpse of the long glaring streak of horizon through the troughs of the waves; sometimes an unluckier splash than usual over the bow and through the forechains, that made us look sharp lest the canvas of the foresail should go, or the schooner broach end-on to the sea. Otherwise, all we had to do was to watch the binnacle, hold on with one hand to a rope, and with the other to our caps; or turn out and in with each other down the booby-hatch for a snatch of sleep, and a bit of biscuit and cold beef, with a glass of grog. Mr Webb, the harbour officer, was to be seen below in his berth all this time, lying as peaceable as a child; whether he was dead sick or only confoundedly afraid I didn't know; but I must say I felt for the poor fellow when I heard him ask Snelling in a weak voice, if he would get somebody to stand off the bull's-eye in the deck over his berth, as it always made him think there was a new hurricane coming on. 'You low, skulking hound!' said the reefer, who had wonderfully little pity in his make, 'it can't be worse—what d'ye want light for, eh?' 'Only to see the opposite wall,' said Webb meekly; 'do, sir—oh now!' 'Oh, you lubber, ye!' said Snelling, 'don't you know a bulk-head from a wall yet? If you'd come on deck to bear a hand like others, you wouldn't need light; and I thought you might do for a mate aboard, too—pah, you scum!'

"'Mr Snelling,' said I sharply, as he came through the

cabin, 'a worm will turn when it's trod upon, and so you may find yet, sir!' 'Well, Mr Collins,' said he, as confidently as if I hadn't meant to give him a set-down, 'I don't like the fellow's eye. I'll look after him, sir!'

"Not to mention the young rogue's power of face, which was beyond brass, he had a way of seeing you in two places at once with that upward squint of his, as if his eyes were the points of a pair of compasses, that made the officers of the *Hebe* always send him to the mast-head directly, for fear it should take the frown out of them. In fact, when Snelling's twinkling weather-eye lighted on one's neck, without the other, you almost felt it tickle you, and as usual I turned away with a 'Pshaw!'

"On the second morning, the gale at last began to break, shifting southward; on which, as soon as the sea ran a little easier, I had the helm cautiously put up at a favourable moment, the reefed mainsail, fore-topmast-staysail, and square fore-topsail set as she got before the wind, and away the schooner went; rising on the wide deep-blue swells with a long roll in them, then shearing ahead through their breasts, wrinkled and seething pale-green, till she sank with the fall of the wave—the stump of her aftermast standing, and the fore one shortened by the to'gallant-mast. You may easily believe there was no one aboard more eager to get clear of this weather than myself; as in ordinary circumstances, with a craft like this, in two or three days more we might have been in a high enough latitude to begin looking out for the Indiaman. For my part, I can't deny that the wish for having Tom Westwood safe out of harm's way, and with me in the schooner, strong as it was, played second to the notion of seeing sweet Violet Hyde in any way again, if it was only the last time before she went out of reach altogether; for her getting amongst East India ways of doing, high-flying civilians and soldiers, shows, and sights, either in Calcutta or up-country, was equal to anything else, in my mind. Still, we had six or seven days longer of the heavy seas and hard gales, before north-easting enough could be made to take us beyond the Cape winter, just then coming on, and which the *Seringapatam* had very likely escaped by two or three days, so that she would have a considerable start of us.

"By this time we were standing well up for the Mozam-

bique Channel, which I had heard the Indiaman intended to take in company; a piece of information that made me the more anxious to overtake the *Seringapatam*, at latest, by the time they reached open water again, where, being the only ship for Bombay, she would no doubt part from her consorts. We had a cruiser that year, as I knew, in the Mozambique, where there were some rumours of pirates after the war, so that in case of her happening to speak the *Seringapatam* close, and having got any word of Westwood's affair, he ran a chance of being picked off. However, that wasn't by any means the thing that troubled me most; somehow or other, whenever the picture of Violet's face brought the Indiaman's decks clear into my mind, with all about her, I couldn't get rid of the notion that some ill-luck would come across that ship before she got into port. If any pirate craft were to dodge the whole bevy of Indiamen up the head of the channel, as was pretty sure to be the case, he would probably wait for some signs of separating, and be down upon a single one not long after she cleared the Leychelles Islands, where a lonely enough stretch of the Indian Ocean spreads in. The more I entered upon the thought of it, the more unsufferable it got; especially one day in the mouth of the Mozambique, when it fell a dead calm with a heavy up-and-down swell, fit to roll the sticks out of her; the high blue land of Madagascar being in sight, sometimes to starboard, sometimes to port, then astern, and the clear horizon lying away north-west, dark with a breeze from round the coast. As the hot sun blazed out above us, and the blue water came plunge up over the rail, blazing and flashing, first one side dipped, then the other, I could fancy the passengers on the Indiaman's poop in a light breeze with a suspicious lateen-rigged sail creeping up on her quarter. I thought I saw Violet Hyde's eyes sparkle against the glare of light, and her lips parting to speak—till I actually stamped on the deck, my fists clenched, and I made three strides to the very taffrail of the schooner. All at once I met my second mate's eye coolly fixed on me, which brought me to my senses in a moment, the more so as there was something about this man Jones I couldn't make out, and I had made up my mind to keep a sharp eye on him; though the fact was, it annoyed me most to feel him seeing into *me*, as it were, without troubling himself. 'We shall have the breeze before

long, sir, round Cape Mary yonder,' said he, stepping forward. 'So I expect myself, Mr Jones,' said I, 'though you evidently know the coast better than I do.' With that I gave him a careless side-look, but to all appearance there was nothing particular in his, as he told me he had seen it two or three times before.

CHAPTER XXV

"WITH the evening we were once more running sharp on a wind up channel; and when she did get her own way in a good breeze, the schooner's qualities came out. 'Twas a perfect luxury to look over the side and see the bubbles pass, her sharp bows sliding through it like a knife, she eating into the wind all the time, in a way none but a fore-and-aft clipper could hope to do, with a glassy blue ripple sent back from her weather-bow as far as the fore-chains; then to wake of a morning and feel her bounding under you with a roll up to windward, while the water gushed through and through below the keel, and ran yearning and toppling away back along the outer timbers into her boiling wake, working with the moving rudder. And our man-o'-war's-men were quite delighted with the Young *Hebe*, as they still called her. Snelling was in his element while we were having the new spars sent up aloft—a set of longer sticks than before—till she had twice the air, as well as a knowing rake aft. Next thing was to get the long brass nine-pounder amidships from under the boat, where the Frenchmen had kept it, besides which we found another in her hold; so that, added to six small carronades already on deck, we made a pretty show. Meanwhile, for my own part, I kept cracking on with every stitch of canvas that could be clapped upon the spars, including studding-sails. Jones himself didn't know better than I did by this time how to handle the craft, schooner though she was, in the way of making her use what weather we had to the best purpose. Variable as it proved, too, I was aware the Indiamen would have pretty much the same now as we had; so that, on going aloft with the glass, as I did every watch in the day, I soon began each time expecting one or other of them to heave in sight.

"As for the five hands from Cape Town, they seemed to have fallen in cheerfully enough with our own, and as soon as the fine weather came, the gang of Lascars were set to duty like the rest. Snelling would have them even trained to work the guns, although, if it blew at all hard, not one could be got to go aloft, except their old *serang* and the *tindal*, his mate. What surprised me most was the harbour officer himself at last asking, as Mr Snelling told me, to be put in a watch; but as the midshipman said there was no doubt Webb had made a voyage or two before, somewhere or other, I agreed to it at once. 'I'm not sure, sir,' added the midshipman, with one of his doubtful double looks, 'but the gentleman may have seen blue water the first time at Government expense, and not in the service either—he don't look fore and aft enough, Mr Collins, harbour officer though he be; but, never mind, sir, I'll see after him!' 'Pooh,' said I, laughing; 'if he does turn to, Mr Snelling, it shan't be in the watch *you* have to do with! Hand him over to Mr Jones.' By this time I had changed the mid into my own watch, and given Jones charge of the other—so to him the harbour officer went.

"The main character aboard of us, to me at anyrate, was this Jones himself. The fact was, at first I had my doubts of him altogether, partly owing to the queer way we got hold of him, partly on account of his getting the upper hand so much through chance, in the tremendous weather we had at the outset, till I wasn't sure but it might come into the fellow's head of itself, to be upon some drift or other that might cost me trouble, as things stood. However, I no sooner felt where I was, and got the craft under my own spoke, than I came to set him down for nothing but one of those strange hands you fall in with at sea sometimes, always sailing with a 'purser's name,' a regular wonder of a shipmate, and serving to quote every voyage after, by way of a clincher on all hard points, not to say an oracle one can't get beyond, and can't flow sky-high enough. To tell the truth, though, Jones was as thorough a seaman as ever I met with—never at a loss, never wanting on any hand; whether it was the little niceties we stood in need of for setting the schooner's rigging all right again, which none but a blue-water long-voyage sailor can touch, or, what comes to be still better in tropical latitudes, a cool head and a quick hold, with full experience for all sorts

of weather, 'twas much the same to him. He was all over like iron, too, never seeming to stand in need of sleep, and seeing like a hawk. At any hour I came on deck in his watch, there was Jones, all awake and ready, till hearing him walk the planks over my head of a fine night made me at times keep my eyes open, listening to it and the wash of the water together. I fancied there was something restless in it, like the sea, with now and then an uneven sort of a start; and at last it would come to full stop, that gave me the notion of how he was standing quiet in the same spot; whether he was looking aloft, or thinking, or leaning over the side, or what he was going to do, troubled me wonderfully. The only want in his seamanship I noticed, he evidently wasn't used to handle a large ship; but craft of some kind I was pretty sure he had commanded in the course of his life. As for taking observations, he could do it better than I could then, while the knowledge he had on different heads, that came out by chance, made you think more of a Cambridge graduate than a common sailor, such as he had shipped for with us. The strangest part of all about him, though, was what I couldn't well name, not to this day; 'twas more grained in with his manner, and the ring of his voice at particular moments, as well as his walk, though these were the smart seaman's no less; but one couldn't help thinking of a man that had known the world ashore some time or other, in a different enough station from now—ay, and in a way to bring out softer lines in his face than reefing topsails or seeing the main-tack ridden down would do. The nearest I could come to calling it, far apart as the two men stood, was to fancy he reminded me of Lord Frederick Bury himself; especially when he looked all of a sudden to the horizon in that wide, vacant kind of fashion, as if he expected it farther off than it was; only Jones's face was twice the age, like a man's that had had double the passions in it at the outset, and given them full swing since then; with a sleeping devil in his eye yet, besides, as I thought, which only wanted somewhat to rouse it. Only for that, I had a sort of leaning to Jones myself; but, as it was, I caught myself wishing, over and over, for something to make us fall regularly foul of each other, and get rid of this confounded doubtful state. One hitch of a word to take hold of, and, by Jove! I felt all the blood in my body would boil

out in me to find how we stood, and show it; but nothing of the kind did Jones let pass—and as close as the sea itself he was in regard to his past life. As for the men from the frigate, at least, they seemingly looked on him with no great fondness, and a good deal of respect, in spite of themselves, for his seamanship; whereas, if he had been left in the fore-peak in place of the cabin, I've no doubt in a short time it would have been no man but Jones. You light now and then upon a man afloat, indeed, that his shipmates hold off from, as healthy dogs do from a mad one; and you saw they had some sort of an inkling of the gloomy close nature Jones had in him by the way they obeyed his orders. Webb's three Cape Dutchmen seemed to have a notion he was some being with mysterious powers, while the Lascars ran crouching at his very word—some of them being, as I found, Malays, and the rest Mussulmans from Chittagong; but Jones could send them about in their own language, Dutchmen and all—a part of the matter which did not tend to keep me less careful over him. Still I observed, since his coming aboard, that Jones never once touched liquor, which had plainly enough been his ruin ashore; whether on account of meaning to pull up once for all and mend, or only to have a wider bout at next port, or else to keep himself steady for aught that might turn up, I couldn't settle in my own mind. Though deucedly doubtful of its being the first, the very idea of it made one feel for the man; and, in case of his doing well, I had no small hopes of something in the upshot to save a real sailor like him from going to the devil altogether, as he seemed doing.

“Now, after our getting clear of the rough Cape weather, and the dead-lights being taken out of the stern-windows, I had given a look, for the first time, into the schooner's after-cabins, which were pretty much as the people she belonged to before had left them, except for the rough work the gale had played. There were two of them, one opening into the other; and I must say it was a melancholy sight to meet the bright sunlight streaming into them from off the water astern, with all the little matters either just as if the owners were still inside, or else tumbled about at sixes and sevens. One drawer, in particular, had come out of a table, scattering what was in it on the deck: there was a half-open letter, in a

woman's hand, all French, and showing a lock of hair, with a broken diamond cross of the French Legion of Honour, besides a sort of paper-book full of writing and two printed ones bound in morocco. I picked up the letter and the cross, put them in again, and shoved the drawer back to its place, though I brought the books away with me to have a glance over. What struck me most, though, was a plaster figure of the French Emperor himself, standing fastened on a shelf, with one hand in the breast of his greatcoat, and looking calmly out of the white sightless eyes; while right opposite hung a sort of curtain which you'd have thought they were fixed upon. When I hauled it aside, I stared—there on a shelf to match the other, was a beautiful smiling child's head to the shoulders, of pure white marble, as if it leant off the bulkhead like a cherub out of the clouds.

"Spite of all, however, the touch of likeness it had to the head I got such a glimpse of at Longwood, even when the hot sunlight showed it in my spy-glass so pale and terrible, was sufficient to tell me what *this* was—Napoleon's own little son, in fact, who was made King of Rome, as I remembered hearing at the time. The thought of the schooner's strange French captain and his desperate scheme came back on me so strong, joined to what I saw he had an eye to in fitting out his cabins, that, for my own part, I hadn't the heart to use them myself, and at first sight ordered the dead-lights to be shipped again, and the door locked.

"'Twas a good many days after this, of course, and we had made a pretty fast run up the Mozambique, in spite of the sharp navigation required, sighting nothing larger than the native and Arab craft to be seen thereabouts; we were beginning to clear out from amongst the clusters of islands and shoals at the channel-head, when two large sail were made in open water to nor'-eastward. Next morning by daybreak we were to windward of the weathermost—a fine large Indiaman she was, crowding a perfect tower of canvas. Shortly after, however, the schooner was within hail, slipping easily down upon her quarter, which seemed to give them a little uneasiness, plenty of troops as she seemed to have on board, and looming like a frigate. After some show of keeping on, and apparently putting faith in the man-of-war pennant I hoisted, she hove into the wind, when we found she was the Com-

pany's ship *Warringford*, and the other the something *Castle*, I forget which, both for Calcutta. The next thing, as soon as they found we were tender to His Majesty's frigate *Hebe*, was to ask after the *Seringapatam*; on which I was told she was three or four days' sail ahead with the *Mandarin*, bound to China, neither of them having put in at Johanna Island to refresh.

"I was just ready to put our helm up again and bid good-bye, when the tiffin-gong could be heard sounding on the Indiaman's quarter-deck, and the old white-haired captain politely asked me if I wouldn't come aboard with one or two of my officers to lunch. Mr Snelling gave me a wistful glance—there were a dozen pretty faces admiring our schooner out of the long white awnings; but even if the notion of bringing up Snelling himself as my first officer hadn't been too much for me, not to speak of either Jones or Webb, why the very thoughts that everything I saw recalled to me, made me the more eager to get in sight of the *Seringapatam*. 'Thank you, sir,' answered I. 'No—I must be off after the Bombay ship.' 'Ah,' hailed the old captain, 'some of your Admiral's post-bags, I suppose. Well, keep as much northing as you can, sir, and I daresay you'll find her parted company. She's got a jury fore-topmast up, for one she lost a week ago; so you can't mistake her for the *Mandarin*, with a good glass.' 'Have you noticed any suspicious craft lately, sir?' asked I. 'Why, to tell you the truth, lieutenant,' sang out he, looking down off the high bulwarks at our long nine-pounders and the knot of Lascars, 'none more so than we thought *you*, at first, sir!' The cadets on the poop roared with laughter, and an old lady with two daughters seemed to eye Snelling doubtfully, through an opera-glass as the reefer ogled both of them at once.

"'By-the-by,' sang out the captain of the Indiaman to me again, 'I fancy the passengers in that ship must have got somehow uncomfortable—one of our Bengal grandees aboard of her wanted a berth to Calcutta with us, t'other day in the Mozambique; but we're too full already!' 'Indeed, sir?' said I; but the schooner's mainboom was jibbing over, and with two or three more hails, wishing them a good voyage, and so on, away we slipped past their weather-bow. The

Warringford got under weigh at her leisure, and in an hour or two her topsails were down to leeward of us. On I cracked with square and studding-sails to the quartering breeze, till the schooner's light hull jumped to it, and aloft she was all hung out of a side, like a dairyman's daughter carrying milk; with the pace she went at, I could almost say to an hour when we should overhaul the chase.

"Still, after two or three days of the trade-wind, well out in the Indian Ocean, and not a spot to be seen, we had got so far up the Line as to make me sure we had overrun her. Accordingly, the schooner was hauled sharp on a wind to cruise slowly down across what must be the Indiaman's track, judging as we could to a nicety, with a knowledge of the weather we had had. For my part, I was so certain of sighting her soon, that I ordered the after-cabins to be set to rights, seeing a notion had taken hold of me of actually offering them to Sir Charles Hyde for the voyage to Calcutta—fancy the thought! 'Twas too good to be likely; but Violet herself actually being in that little after-cabin and sleeping in it—the lively schooner heading away alone for India, and they and Westwood the sole passengers aboard—why, the very idea of it was fit to drive me crazy with impatience.

"Well, one fine night, after being on deck all day, and the whole night before, almost, I had turned into my cot to sleep. From where I lay I could see the moonshine off the water through the stern-light in that after-cabin, by the half-open door. I felt the schooner going easily through the water, with a rise and fall from the heave of the long Line-swell; so close my eyes I couldn't, especially as the midshipman could be heard snoring on the other side like the very deuce. Accordingly I turned out into the after-cabin, and got hold of one of the Frenchman's volumes to read, when, lo, and behold! I found it was neither more nor less than Greek, all I knew being the sight of it. Next I commenced overhauling the bundle of handwriting, which I took at first for a French log of the schooner's voyage, and sat down on the locker to have a spell at it. So much as I could make out, in spite of the queer outlandish turn the letters had, and the quirks of the unnatural sort of language, it was curious enough—a regular story, in fact, about his own life, the war, and Bonaparte himself.

“At another time I’d have given a good deal to go through with it at odd hours—and a strange affair I found it was some time afterwards; but meanwhile I had only seen at the beginning that his name was *Le Comte Victor l’Allemand, Capitaine, de la Marine Française*, and made out at the end how there was some scheme of his beyond what I knew before, to be carried out in India—when it struck me there was no one on the quarterdeck above. I listened for a minute through the stern-window, and thought I heard someone speaking, over the schooner’s lee-quarter, as she surged along; so slipping on jacket and cap, I went on deck at once.

“It was middle-watch at the time; but as soon as I came up I saw all was quiet—Webb near the gangway talking to the old Lascar serang, and breaking the English wonderfully betwixt them; while the Lascars of the watch were sitting like tailors in a ring on the forecastle planks, each waiting for his turn of one cocoa-nut hookah, that kept hubble-bubbling away gravely under the smoker’s nose, as he took a long suck at it, while the red cinder in the bowl lighted up his leathery Hindoo face and moustache like a firefly in the root of a banyan, till he handed it, without even a wipe, to his neighbour. These fellows had begun to get much livelier as we made the tropics; and this same serang of theirs had put out his horns once or twice to Snelling lately, though he drew them in again the moment he saw me—a sulky old knotty-faced, yellow-eyed devil I thought him at any rate, while his dish-cloth of a turban, his long blue gown and red trousers, reminded you at sea in a gale of a dancing dervish. The day we spoke the Indiaman, in fact, I noticed there was something in the wind for a minute or two with him and his gang, which put in my head at first to offer them to the captain for a couple of good English hands; and as I passed him and Webb this time the serang stopped his talk and sidled off.

“However, a beautiful night it was, as ever eye looked upon even in the blue Indian Ocean: the heavens cloudless, the full round moon shining high off our weather-beam again, the stars drawn up into her bright light, as it were, trembling through the films of it like dewdrops in gossamer of a summer morning: you saw the sea meet the sky on every hand, without a speck on the clear line of horizon, through the squares of our ratlins and betwixt the schooner’s too long fore-and-aft

booms. A pretty strongish breeze we had too, blowing from east to west with a sweep through the emptiness aloft, and a wrinkling ripple over the long gentle swells as deep in the hue as if fresh dye came from the bottom, and crisping into a small sparkle of foam wherever they caught it full. Something pleasant, one could not say what, was in the air; and every sheet being hauled taut to hold wind, the slant gush of it before her beam drove her slipping ahead toward the quarter it came from, with a dip down and a saucy lift of her jibs again, as if she were half balanced amidships, but little noise about it. I took a squint aloft and an overhaul all round, and nothing was to be seen. The size of the sky through the moonlight looked awful, as it were, and the strength of the breeze seemed to send a heavenly blue deep into the western quarter till you saw a star in it. The night was so lovely, in fact, it somehow made one think of one's mother, and old times, when you used to say your prayers. Still I couldn't see the mate of the watch on the weather quarterdeck, which surprised me the more in Jones's case, since he was always ready for me when I came up; and, to tell the truth, I shouldn't have been sorry to catch him napping for once, only to show he was like men in common. I walked aft by the weather-side of the large mainsail, accordingly, till I saw him leaning with his head over the lee-bulwark, and heard him again, as I thought, apparently speaking to someone down the schooner's side; upon which I stepped across.

"Jones's back was to me as I looked over too; but owing to what he was busy with, I suppose, and the wash of the water which was louder there than inboard, while you heard the plash from her bows every time she forged he evidently didn't hear me. You may fancy my wonder to find he was reading aloud out to himself from the other of the Frenchman's volumes, which I had no doubt left in the dining-cabin—the book open in both hands, he giving it forth in long staves, with a break between—and regular Greek it was too. You'd have thought he timed them to the plash alongside; and I must say, as every string of long-tailed words flowed together like one, in Jones's deep voice, and the swell rose once or twice with its foam-bells near his very hands, I almost fancied I made a meaning of them—each like a wave, as it were, sweeping to a crest, and breaking. The gusto the man

showed in it you can't conceive, and, what was more, I had no doubt he understood the sense of it, for all of a sudden, after twenty staves or so of the kind he stopped. 'There!' said he, 'there, old Homer—women, wine, and adventure—what could the devil ask more, blind old prater, with a sound in you like the sea? Ay, wash, wash, wash away, lying old blue-water, you can't wash *it* out—and wine—no, not the strongest rum in Cape Town—can wash *you* out!' With that Jones laid his head on his arms, with the book still in one hand, muttering to himself, and I listened in spite of me. 'Still, it rouses the old times in me!' said he. 'Here comes this book across me, too. Ay, ay, and the rector fancied, sitting teaching me Greek out of old wild Homer all weekday—and—and his girl slipping out and in—'twould do to don the cassock of a Sunday and preach out of the pulpit against the world, the devil, and the flesh—then warn me against the sea—ha!'

"The laugh that came from him at that moment was more like a dog than a human being; but on he went muttering 'Women, wine, and adventures, said ye, old Greek, and a goddess too; still he *was* a good old man, the rector—no guile nor evil in him, with his books in the cases yonder, and the church-spire seen through the window over the garden, and his wife with—ah, the less of that the better.—'Twas in me, though, and all our blood—and in *her* dark eyes, too, Mary though she was!' He broke out again, after a bit, as if he'd been arguing it with something under the side: 'I didn't take her the first time I came home—nor the second—but—but—ay, I came *back*! Oh that parting-stile in sight of the sea—and that packet-ship—but O God! that night—that night with the schooner forging ahead through the blue—blue——' And he stopped with a groan that shook him as he leant over. 'Hellish!' he said, suddenly standing upright and looking straight aloft with his bare head and face to the wide empty sky, and the moonlight tipping the hair on his forehead, from over the high shadow on the leeside of the mainsail, where it glistened along the gaff. 'She was pure to the last!' I heard him say, though I had walked to the other side of the boom; 'ay, though I rot to perdition for it!—Down, old fiend!' as he lifted his one hand with the book, and drove it alongside, seemingly watching it settle away astern.

"Now I had heard nothing from Jones that I couldn't have fancied before, and there was even a humour to my mind in the notion of clapping it all on old Homer, if Homer it was, and heaving him overboard with such a confoundedly complimentary burial-service. But some of the words that dropped from him shot through one's veins like icicles; and now there was something fearful in the sight of him standing straight again, with a look right into the heavens, as if he'd have searched them up and up—in that lovely night too, spread far and wide—the very rays of the moonlight sparkled down the weather-side of the sail I was on, trembling on the leech-ropes and brails as they swayed, and into the hollows they made in the belly of the taut canvas; the long shining spot of it wavered and settled on the same two planks of the quarterdeck, beyond the shadow of the bulwark from the moon's eye, fast as the schooner moved through the water, and it was like a hand laid upon her, with the air and wind stretching between. Of a sudden I saw Jones wheel slowly round where he stood, like a man turned about by main strength, with his eyes fixed aloft, and his one arm raising from the shoulder till his forefinger pointed to something, as I thought, about the fore-to'gallant-sail. His face was like ashes, his eye glaring, and I sprang across to him under the main-boom. 'See!' said he, never turning his head, and the words hissed betwixt his teeth, 'look at that!'

"'For Heaven's sake, *what*, Mr Jones?' said I. '*Her—her*,' was his answer, 'coming against the wind—dead fore-and-aft in the shade of the sails!' On the lee-sides of them the high boom-sails made a sort of a thin shadow against the moonshine off the other beam, which came glimpsing through between them out of a world of air to the south-east, with a double of it flickering alongside on the water as it heaved past to leeward; and whether it was fancy, or whether it was but the reflection aloft from below, I thought as I followed Jones's finger, I saw something like the shape of a woman's dress floating close in with the bonnet of the fore-topmast-staysail, from the dusk it made to the breast of the fore-topsail, and even across the gush of white light under the yard—long and straight, as it were, like a thing lifted dripping out of water, and going, as he said, right against the schooner's

course. 'Now in the foresail!' whispered Jones, his eye moving as on a pivot, and a thrill ran through me at the notion; for I made out one single moment what I thought a face against the sky at the gaff-end, white as death, shooting aft towards the mainsail—though next instant I saw it was but a block silvered by the moon as the schooner lifted. 'Now the mainsail!' said he, huskily, 'and now—now by the heavens—rising—rising to the gaff-topsail—away! O Lord! *Mary!*'

"He was leaning aft toward the width of the sky, with both hands clutched together before him, shuddering all over. For the first minute my own blood crept, I must say; but directly after I touched him on the shoulder. 'This is strange, Mr Jones,' said I; 'what's the matter?' 'Once in the Bermudas!' said he, still wildly, 'once in the Pacific—and now! Does the sea give up its dead, though, think ye?' 'You've a strong fancy, Mr Jones, that's all,' I said sternly. 'Fancy!' said he, though beginning to get the better of himself; 'did ye ever fancy a face looking down—down at you in the utterest scorn—down sideways off the shoulder of the garment, as it sticks wet into every outline like life? All the time gliding on the other way, too, and the eyes like two stars a thousand miles away beyond, as kind as angels'—neither wind nor sea can stop it, till suddenly it rises to the very cope of heaven—still looking scornfully down at you!—No, sir, fancy it *you* couldn't!'

"The glance he gave me was somehow or other such as I couldn't altogether stomach from the fellow, and he was turning to the side when I said quietly, 'No, nor Homer either, I daresay!' Jones started and made a step towards me. 'You heard me a little ago!' rapped out he, eyeing me. 'Yes,' I said; 'by Jove! who could help being curious to hear a sailor spout Greek as you were doing, Mr Jones?'

"'The fact is, Mr Collins,' answered he, changing his tone, 'I was well brought up—the more shame to me for bringing myself to what you saw me. I had a sister drowned, too, on her passage to America one voyage, when I was mate of the ship myself. No wonder it keeps my nerves shaking sometimes, when I've had too long about shore.' 'Well, well, Jones,' said I, rather softening, 'you've proved yourself a first-rate seaman, and I've got nothing to complain of; but I tell

you fairly I had my doubts of you! So you'll remember you're under the Articles of War aboard here, sir,' added I, 'which, as long as I have this schooner under hand, I'll be hanged if I don't carry out!' All at once the thought struck me, a little inconveniently, of my carrying off Webb, and his people, and I fancied Jones's quick eye wandered to the Lascars forward. 'I know it, sir,' said he, looking me steadily in the face; 'and what's more, Mr Collins, at any rate I couldn't forget you picked me out, confounded low as I looked, to come aft here. 'Tis not every captain afloat that has such a good eye for a seaman, as I know!' 'Oh, well, no more about it,' I said, walking forward on the weather-side, and leaving him on the lee one as distinctly as Lord Frederick Bury could have done to myself in the frigate. Jones no doubt thought I didn't notice the slight wrinkle that gathered round his lee eye when he gave me this touch of butter at the end; but I put it down for nothing more, gammon though it was.

"It was near the end of the watch, the moon beginning to set, while it still wanted three hours of daybreak in those latitudes, when the look-out on the topgallant-yard, who was stationed there in man-o'-war cruising fashion, reported a sail to windward. Just then the midshipman came on deck to his watch, wonderfully early for him indeed, and on my remarking it was probably the Indiaman at last, Jones himself went aloft with the night-glass to make her out. 'Mr Snelling,' said I, 'see the hands on deck ready for going about.' Next minute I saw him rousing up the rest of the Lascars, who slept watch and watch on the forecastle. Only five or six of the *Hebe's* men were up, and all of them, save the man at the wheel, ran aloft to rig out stunsail-booms to windward, as soon as the schooner was fairly on the starboard tack, standing to nor'-eastward. Suddenly I saw a scuffle between the midshipman and the tindal,* a stout, dark-faced young Bengalee, with a jaunty skull-cap and frock, whom Snelling had probably helped along with a touch of a rope's end, and in a moment two or three more of them were upon him, while the reefer drew his dirk, and sung out to me, scarce before I was with him, the Lascars rolling into the lee-scuppers at two kicks of my foot.

"Webb and three of the men from Cape Town were

* Lascar boatswain's mate.

hoisting a stunsail at the time, the smart man-o'-war's-men aloft singing out to them to bear a hand. What with the noise of the sail flapping, and its being betwixt my own men and the deck, they could know nothing of the matter; and the Lascars let go the halliards in a body, making a rush at Snelling and myself with everything they could pick up in the shape of a spar.

"This would have been nothing, as in two or three minutes more the men would have been down, and the cocoa-faced rascals dodged every way from the handspike I got hold of; but I just caught a glimpse on one side of the sly old serang shoving on the fire-scuttle to keep down the watch below; and on the other, of Webb looking round him, evidently to see how matters stood. Two Dutchmen seized the first sailor that came down the rigging, by the legs, and I saw the affair must be finished at once, it had so much the look of a regular plot on Webb's part, if Jones wasn't concerned in it too. I made one spring upon my Cape Town gentleman, and took him by the throat with one hand, while I hit the biggest Dutchman full behind the ear, felling him to the deck, on which the man-o'-war's-man grappled his watch-mate, and Webb was struggling with me sufficiently to keep both my hands full, when I had a pleasant inkling of a Malay Lascar slipping toward my back with a bare krees in his fist.

"I just looked over my shoulder at his black eyes twinkling devilishly before he sprang, when someone came sliding fair down from the fore-topmast-head by a back-stay, and pitched in a twinkling on top of his head—a thing enough to break the neck of a monument. Directly after, I saw Jones himself hitting right and left with his night-glass, from the moonlight to the shadow of the foresail, while Snelling tumbled over a Lascar at every slap, standing up in boxer-style. By the time the rest of the men came down all was settled—the Dutchmen sulking against the bulwarks, and Webb gasping after I let him go. 'Boatswain,' said I to one of the sailors, 'clap that man in irons below. Mr Snelling, see the watch called, sir.' 'I 'ad the law with me,' said Webb, gloomily. 'You plotted it, then, Mr Webb?' I said. 'Didn't you carry us off illegally?' said he. 'I only meant to recover the vessel—upon my honour, nothing more, sir; and if you're 'ard with me, you'll have to answer for it, I assure you!' Here he looked round

to Jones in a strange way, as I fancied, for a moment; but Jones turned on his heel with a sneer. 'Why, Mr Webb,' answered I, 'you lost that tack by offering yourself in a watch, which makes the thing neither more nor less than mutiny—so take him below, do ye hear, bo'sun!' And down he went.

"'Now, Mr Jones,' said I, as soon as all hands were on deck, 'you'll be so good as have half of these Lascars seized to the rigging here, one after the other, and see a good dozen given to each of their backs; then these two Dutchmen, each three dozen—then pipe down the watch, sir.'

"Jones glanced at me, then at the fellows, then at me again. I thought he hung aback for an instant; but do it I was determined he should, for a reason I had; and I gave him back the look steady as stone. 'Ay, ay, sir,' said he, at last, touching his hat. I walked aft to the capstan, and stood there till every mother's son of them had got his share, the Lascars wriggling and howling on the deck after it, and the Dutchmen twisting their backs as they walked off. 'Twas the first time I did that part of duty in command, and I felt, in the circumstances, I was in for carrying it out with a taut hand.

"By this time the moon was setting, and in the dusk we lost sight of the sail to windward; but as we were heading well up to weather upon her, and going at least ten knots, I turned in below for a little, leaving the midshipman. Accordingly, it wasn't very long before Snelling called me in broad daylight. 'She's a large ship, Mr Collins,' said he, 'standing under all sail on a wind. I hope to goodness, sir, it's that confounded Indiaman at last!' I hurried on deck, took the glass aloft, and soon made out the jury fore-topmast shorter than the main, as the old captain mentioned. Accordingly, it was with somewhat of a flutter in me I came down again, watching the schooner's trim below and aloft, to see if I couldn't take an hour or so off the time betwixt that and once more setting eyes on the judge's daughter.

CHAPTER XXVI

"AFTER breakfast-time the breeze freshened again, and the ship had evidently perceived us, as well as the fact of our having hauled on a wind to make up with her course; for we could see her hoisting out one stunsail after another to the lee-side, and keeping off in order to give them full play. This was what I was afraid of, in fact, that our looking her way in the circumstances would make her show her heels; and being hull down, almost dead to windward of us, with her spread of sail to such a breeze as the present, it was like to be a troublesome matter ere we got within signalling distance; especially if she had kept hold of her wind a little more, instead of falling off before it as she did, which tended the schooner always steadily to weather upon her, the sharper we kept her nose to the sun in the spray. Indeed, the wind during the forenoon came gradually round more in our favour, till it stood south-east by east or so; by which time, however, we had dropped her topsails from the deck, then her to'-gallantsails, to a white speck far down on the lee-bow. We weathered fast upon her, and I fancied I made out the yellow India patches in her canvas; when, on turning about, I caught Jones's glance at me, as if he couldn't understand my eagerness, or else had got curious what the schooner wanted with the ship at all. 'She loses, I think, sir,' said he looking off to her again. 'Little doubt of that, Mr Jones,' said I. 'I know that Indiaman's sailing to a tee—but we shan't overhaul her at this rate an hour too soon, before she might have a chance of dropping us in the dark, or our running to leeward of her again.' 'Why, yes,' said Jones, carelessly, 'if they knew how to do it, sir.' 'By George! Mr Collins,' exclaimed Snelling, 'I see her stern-gallery sparkling in the run of the surges.'

"In a little while we could notice her canvas darken slowly from the courses to the to'-gallant-sails, leaving the royals and studding-sails whiter than before: they were wetting her sails. 'She must take us for something bad, Lieutenant Collins!' remarked Jones, as if the thing were at all doubtful. 'A pirate, in fact,' added the reefer, with a grin. 'Why, sir,' said he, 'these Company's men seem to think the sea swarms

with pirates, though I'm blessed if we've been so lucky as to sight even the tail-feather of one—my eye! though, how the griffins must be skipping about just now!

"The truth was, the nearer we got, the more it struck me that, altered as the schooner was aloft, our red streak and lead-coloured sides were just as the first time I saw them; which wouldn't do much toward settling the Indiaman's doubts of us, for they couldn't fail to remember her the moment our hull came in sight; and as for my own character all along aboard the *Seringapatam*, why, neither first nor last did it seem to stand in good odour. 'Mr Jones,' said I, as we slipped quietly through the water, 'have you got any old canvas at hand, sir?—be so good as have it ripped up in lengths, and fast clapped outside from stem to stern along that red streak of ours, up as far as the plank sheer, missing the ports—give her a good broad white stripe, sir, instead!' 'Ay, ay, sir!' answered he, with a gleam in his eye as he turned off, half knowing, half in surprise. 'And, Mr Snelling,' continued I, 'hark ye, see all the hammocks stowed over the bulwarks in her waist—and run both those long-guns forward, chock in to the eyes of her, to bring her down by the head a little—keep the men on the foc'sle too—she looks rather rakish at present, I must confess!'

"All this the young gentleman seemed to do with as rueful a look as if he were putting knee-breeches and gaiters in place of white ducks, on his own lower timbers; and presently he came aft to ask if he mightn't stick a shot into each of the guns. 'What for?' said I. 'Oh,' said the midshipman, 'won't she show fight at all, sir, then?' Just then the white range of the Indiaman's heavy quarter-gallery came into view, then the bulge of her big hulking body half on to us, with a port-lid or two raised in the white band: we were to windward of her already, stealing up on her quarter. 'My eye!' said Snelling, 'she could blow us out of water, if she choose, Mr Collins, and only had pluck enough.' 'Why, that's all you know about it, Mr Snelling,' said I, with a laugh, 'since she don't carry long muzzles in her side, and in a light breeze like this we could—however, as we happen to be friends, that's of no moment, Mr Snelling.' 'After all, though,' I added, 'you *may* load once, and stand by to fire across her course, if required; but, for the life of you,

Snelling,' said I, seriously, 'in any case, if I give the word to fire, don't let anything in the shape of iron go near that ship's hull! By Jove! sir, I'd let her blow us out of the water first, or else show her our heels, myself!'

"Well, about four in the afternoon, there we were coming down actually on the ship's quarter, from windward; when we took in our flying-kites, clued up gaff and fore-topsails, and to'gallant-sail, leaving St George's flag fluttering bright at the main-peak, and our long coach-whip streaming from the mast-head, while she kept gliding easily ahead under nothing but the two boomsails and large jib. Still the Indiaman gave no other sign except showing the British ensign, then her striped Company's flag under it, at the mizzen-peak: she went jogging steadily on, as I was afraid she would, like a fellow giving you the go-by in the street. 'Nothing else for it, after all, Mr Snelling,' said I, walking forward, as we got within long range. 'The confounded fools!' I couldn't help saying, 'do they think a piratical craft would give herself the trouble of hoisting all the flags in Christendom one after the other, and she, of course, with a long-Tom on a pivot amidships? Mr Jones, oblige me by pitching a shot right across her fore-foot?' Jones stepped forward, had the gun slued, and blew the match. 'Are you ready?' said I—'now mind your eye—fire!' and the ball went spinning from the top of one swell to another beyond the Indiaman's bows, rather wide of the mark, as I thought: when, all at once, the smoke had scarce cleared away betwixt us ere I saw her jib-sheets fly, and the Indiaman luffing up in the wind. Jones started, as almost next moment we could see the spritsail-yard hanging in two across the spars—I must say, rather to my own surprise, in spite of a good deal of old cruising practice.

"'A good aim, sir!' remarked he, turning round. 'There goes her mainyard, now!' said Snelling; and she seemed to be heaving-to, when the mainsail filled again, and on she stood as before; then actually broached-to, all aback, and gathering stern-way with her bows fairly facing us; while the black figurehead under the bowsprit showed me his turban again once more, like a fellow leaning over a horse he couldn't manage. 'What the mischief *are* the lubbers about!' I said, 'can't they heave-to at once and be done with it, now that I fancy they see their mistake?'

"Here Jones, who had got aft and stood up on the taffrail, jumped down again all at once, and met me at the capstan. 'Lieutenant Collins,' said he in a low voice, and looking me straight in the face with a very queer expression, 'the ship has *struck!*' 'Struck!' repeated I, starting; and he, Snelling, and I sprang to the taffrail together. There was the Indiaman, in fact, at length heaving into the wind, about three-quarters of a mile off our lee-beam, with her two ensigns hauled down, and something flying instead of them at the gaff-end, which I couldn't make out. Our helm was put up, and the schooner edged swiftly down to her, slipping along in sight of her stretch of bulwarks till we had hove-to abreast of her starboard bow.

"'What ship is that?' hailed I from abaft, as we ran past in the shadow of her sails; and I saw my gentleman 'first officer,' Finch, standing up in her mizzen-chains with the trumpet, more dashing than ever, as he had poor Captain Williamson's uniform coat and hat on, apparently, and a sword by his side: her whole quarter-bulwark bristling with spy-glasses and gun-barrels turned upon the schooner, though not another head could be seen. 'The Honourable East In——' began Finch; but that moment there was a perfect hubbub of cries and cheers, as a dozen faces I knew well showed themselves popping up from the quarterdeck: Old Rollock in a huge straw hat and his shirt-sleeves, with a ship's musket in his fists; Ford, Winterton, and the cadets—the long-faced Scotch surgeon, and Macleod's screwed nose and red whiskers—every eye fixed on me, as I fancied, not to say three or four rusty barrels. Their confusion and bewilderment was rare to witness; and being forty hands of us—the Lascars' outlandish physiognomies and all—why, the schooner must have looked rather respectable as she still slid ahead.

"In the meantime, the look of our smart *Hebe's* men, with the frigate's name shining in front of their regular-built hats, and everything about us, not to say the reefer's naval uniform and mine, seemed to have set the Indiaman's people more at their ease; till, when our gig's crew was ready to lower away, there was even a glimpse of ladies to be seen along toward her poop. Every moment I expected the sight of a certain face to flash on me from over the black rail, as the ship rolled and plunged in the heave of water opposite us, showing her

broad white band, with the drips of rust across it from her chain-plates. 'We made somewhat of an awkward mistake, sir!' hailed Finch, eyeing me queerly enough, and trying to appear at his ease. 'So I supposed, sir,' said I; 'I shall send a boat aboard of you directly'; and I turned to the midshipman, who stood surveying the ship from stem to stern with his nose turned away from her, and his hands in the tails of his coat, speaking all the time to Mr Jones, though the latter was apparently the least interested of the two, for he had his eye seaward.

"'Mr Snelling,' said I, 'd'ye see that gentleman yonder near the main-rigging, with the black hat on? You'll go aboard in the gig, sir, give your commanding-officer's compliments to the captain of the Indiaman, and mention to him that that gentleman is wanted here—Westwood his name is.'

"To tell you the truth, my head was in a perfect whirl at knowing that, if I chose, five minutes could set me within speaking distance of Violet—yet you'd scarce believe I actually almost made up my mind not to go on deck again till our sheets were hauled aft, and we leaving the ship astern. Bless your heart! I wasn't aware till that minute *what* I felt for her; everything about the voyage from Portsmouth came back so fresh on me, at sight of the different parts about the old *Seringapatam's* bulwarks, to the very odds-and-ends of ropes hanging alongside that blessed lumbering coach-house of hers amidships, and the live-stock cackling and bleating in it between times! And there was I glancing aft into our little stern-cabins, which I fancied two or three days ago might serve for *their* passage. But now, though I had a pretty sharp guess these same cabins were meant originally for neither more nor less than an emperor himself, why, I saw the very notion was too ridiculous to mention! 'Mr Jones,' said I, speaking up the skylight, 'as soon as you see that passenger is in the boat, have the head sheets hauled aft, sir, and the helm put up to make sail.' 'Ay, ay, sir,' said he; but directly after, he added in a low voice, 'I believe though, sir, we are not likely to part company from this ship so soon!' 'How, sir!' exclaimed I sharply, and starting up off the chair to see him, for something in the cool, collected tone of his voice jarred on me the more on account of the state I was in myself—'what do you mean by that?' I had merely

to catch sight of my mate's broad throat and hairy chin, however, as he stood with his full chest thrown back, and one hand in his waistcoat, looking aloft by the skylight, when, following his eye to our main-gaff, it was easy to know the last fanning of the wind; which, taken together with the schooner's jerking motion abaft, was sufficient to give you word of a calm. 'We have lost the breeze for to-night, at any rate, sir,' said Jones, letting his eyes suddenly fall upon me, and meeting the flicker of pleasure I couldn't help showing on my face. 'Confound the thing! you don't say so, Mr Jones!' rejoined I quickly. 'Then as long as she has a foot's steerage-way, sir, let her slip off the Indiaman's bow at once—else the two of us will be grinding together ere daylight like a couple of mill-stones without corn!'

"On deck there were twenty things worth noticing, that struck one at the same time. The schooner's light spars and white canvas seen sharp against the white glare of light in the west, as she settled round on the ship's other bow; while the light air high aloft in the Indiaman's royals still kept steadying her with her lee-side to the sunset, where it made a red trough along the horizon down through a golden cloud or two, that looked like bright-winged things whirling off and about the sun.

"Our gig was holding off by the boat-hook from her lee-quarter, the oars up-ended, and two or three sailors, with their heads shoved out under a port-lid on the main deck, talking to the boat's crew, while a few of the men hung over the high black top-sides, peering aft at the gig; the rest being gathered in the ship's bows, with their eyes fixed on the schooner. The huge round of the sun went down astern like the mouth of a furnace, sending a broad stream of red light across the face of the water with every wet streak and wrinkle shown heaving in it, right up to the Indiaman's white band and her pitch-black bulwarks. Her quarter-galleries lashed out, and you saw the passengers' heads aft through the red arch under the wide mainsail-foot, till every face shone crimson-bright out of the awning below; and I could see the midshipman's gold band glisten as he took his cap off to some ladies coming down the poop-stair, amidst a hubbub of cadets turning round to eye the schooner. For half-a-minute the smooth sea all astern of the ship seemed to wash to her water-line in a flood of

light and blood almost, as if the horizon vanished ; then the tip of the sun went down like a burning ruby, the blue heave of water sank away from the copper at the Indiaman's bows, giving us an easy lift at the other side of the swell, and the whole compass of the sea appeared to slide round cool and clear against the soft flush of all possible tints in the west ; till the deep indigo hue of the calm spread melting off from both of us.

“What I gave most heed to was the knots of men's faces on the *Seringapatam's* forecastle, as the golden gleam of light and the red glare struck across them with all sorts of queer touches, that brought back every one of them clearly to mind at once ; and, stepping forward where Mr Jones's figure was to be seen dark against the pale glow in the west, I could easily make out ugly Harry's big buffalo head, as he leant his chin on his two hands, and surveyed us up and down, with his dirty tarpaulin on the back of his head as usual, and his shaggy black hair like thatch over his forehead, almost down to the meeting of his thick eyebrows. The moment I appeared, Mister Harry Foster shifted himself with a start, looked aloft to his own ship, and began to whistle as if for wind ; the same moment Jones turned and noticed me, too, and the difference of the two men's faces struck me the more, that I couldn't help thinking extremes met. ‘That fellow there seems to like us so well, Mr Jones,’ said I, laughing, ‘that I've half a mind to bring him aboard, as I *could* !’ ‘Who—which, sir ?’ said the mate, looking to every part of the Indiaman but the right one. ‘Why, that misbegotten-like rascal you were looking at,’ said I ; ‘I know a little of him, and a more thorough blackguard doesn't walk planks !’ ‘There's the boat, though, Lieutenant Collins !’ said Jones suddenly : the boat-hook struck our mizzen-chains on the other side in the dusk, and next minute Tom Westwood swung himself on board, with the midshipman and Old Rollock the planter following in his wake ; the last, to my surprise, carrying two hat-boxes and an umbrella.

“‘Why, Ned Collins !’ broke out Westwood, ‘what *is* the meaning of all this—what wind has blown you here ?’ ‘My *dear* fellow !’ shouted the planter, almost jumping on top of me, ‘I never in my life saw the like of you—the very same infernal schooner, too ! Come, let's hear—have you taken 'em all then, head and tail—have you——’

“‘For Heaven’s sake, Mr Rollock,’ said I, sheering out of his way as well as I could, ‘come below, sir, if I must answer all these questions!’ ‘So you are actually in command?’ said Westwood; and hereupon I gave him the bearings of his own affair, with the fact of my falling in with Lord Frederick Bury, of course; and of all men in the world, I believe, the ‘Honourable Bury’ was the one Westwood could feel comfortable under, as his face showed at the time. ‘Whether I lose you or not in the Hooghly, Tom,’ said I, ‘I daresay you’ll find yourself in the end aboard the *Hebe*, in some shape or other! and meantime I shall be glad of you here for a first mate.’ ‘Well, well,’ put in the planter again, impatiently, after having kept questioning me every now and then for the last ten minutes, which I answered without well knowing what he said—‘then you hung him, of course?’ ‘Hung whom?’ asked I, obliged to attend by Mr Rollock’s perseverance. ‘Why, El Americano, to be sure—the Yankee—Snout!’ said he, trying to lengthen his face for the news. ‘Hung him—no!’ said I, laughing; ‘when I saw him on deck there, last, he was lively enough, and anxious to get those images of his out of the *Seringapatam*.’ The planter’s rosy gills turned a shade or two paler, and he started off his seat. ‘God bless me!’ said he, in a low voice, and looking over his shoulder, ‘you don’t mean to say you’ve brought the man back on me. I declare to you I lost a few pounds of my weight here before, by his actually conceiving a friendship for me!’ Old Rollock’s dismay was so comical that I could scarce find in my heart to ease his mind, as I did.

“‘Why, my dear fellow,’ said Westwood, with a smile, ‘I assure you that disappearance of yours took me by surprise. Indeed, I only guessed, from something Captain Finch let drop afterwards, how it came about; and till the very moment the brig-of-war got under way, I fancied you had some other plan in view, or else you never would have carried it out. The fact was, Ned, if your heart was bound for India, mine was ashore in old England, and I’d rather have run the risk to go back!’ Here Tom caught my glance, and looked shyly into one waistcoat pocket, then into another, fidgeting on his chair, poor fellow! in a way that brought my sister Jane’s grey eyes, and her demure little arch face, distinctly before me, thousands of miles as there were between us and Croydon.

The thought of the *Seringapatam* being so near, on the other hand, somehow rushed on me at the same time, and I felt wonderfully mild toward Tom. 'Hang it, Tom!' said I, 'never mind thinking of it—mix your grog, man, and confound all care to the bottom of the sea. You're well off! For my part,' said I, 'I had no notion at all how *that* case stood, so I made a cursed mistake in the matter—but here's luck!'

"However," said he, 'I saw *your* drift by that time; and the young lady herself was in the fore-cabin when I told her father the whole story, not long after you went off. 'Twas no use with Sir Charles, though, to say you were only carrying out the joke to screen me, and amuse yourself at the same time—he was sure you were after some scheme; and all the while Miss Hyde sat sewing on the sofa behind us, as quiet and careless as if she didn't hear a word, or trouble herself about the matter. When I came upon your vanishing so suddenly in the brig, however, and said I was sure, by that time, you did so in order to let me clear off, I had my eye on the looking-glass opposite the young lady; and whatever you may make of it, Ned, I can tell you she started and glanced up at that point.' 'Well, and what of that?' I asked. But Westwood went on—'It was all one to Sir Charles, nevertheless, whatever way I turned it. According to him, this was just of a piece with the rest of your doings, which showed the bad effects of the naval service. 'Twas no use my standing up for you, saying how fast you had risen, and would rise, if you had the right thing to do—for the old gentleman allowed everything, adding it was so much the worse for such fellows to be set loose. "I tell you what, Mr Westwood," said he, looking round sharply, as if he were speaking *at* somebody else, "there is a soul of mischief in that young man that nothing will root out, unfitting him for everything else, however admirably it may be suited to maritime pursuits or to savage warfare. In short," added the judge, drawing himself up, "it is my conviction he will either be drowned or knocked on the head——"' 'The precious old curmudgeon!' I rapped out, betwixt laughter and rage at the thought of *her* hearing all this pretty character of me. "And I must say, my young friend," said the judge, "I felt much relieved at finding Councillor Westwood's nephew so different an individual—ex-

ceedingly relieved! Besides that, you cannot, of course, continue in the navy!" Just at this moment,' continued Westwood, 'I saw the young lady gather up her work behind us with a sparkle in her eye, rise off the sofa, and walk straight aft through the cabin-door.'

"'Was *that* all?' said I, biting my lip. 'All, you heathen!' answered Tom, laughing. 'Why, what would you have? I'll be bound the judge didn't mean all that for my use, my dear fellow. But the worst of it was, that next day, when I met her with the Brigadier's lady on the poop, the young beauty passed me with as scornful an air as possible; and for a week or so, whenever the judge happened to ask me into the round-house cabins, either she wasn't there, or took an opportunity of walking out—the most I got was a bow or a "good-morning"; so you see the real Simon Pure didn't prosper half so well as the false one!' 'Pooh!' said I, gloomily, thinking of the little ground I had made myself, 'all contradiction—the fact is, you're too simple for women's ways, Westwood.' Westwood looked down and gave a queer smile—as much as to say, I suppose, the case stood just the contrary; and I must own, it struck me *he* must be rather a knowing fellow that could fathom my sister, seeing that, for my part, I understood her no more than my mother's housemaid did, with her high-flown music and poetry, and all that sort of thing.

"'However,' said Westwood, 'I contrived by degrees to get over all this, and for the last week or two we were as good acquaintances as before—in fact, the judge was evidently bent on it. And I tell you what it is, Ned, as charming a girl, in her way, as Violet Hyde I can't well fancy—but one more hopeless to deal with, for a fellow that hasn't got hold of her heart, I believe doesn't breathe! Why, young as she is, you'd feel her playing you round her pretty forefinger as a woman would, looking at you all the time under her soft eyelids with those bright eyes of hers, as if you could fancy her falling in love in a moment with someone else, but never with yourself!' 'By Jove, yes!' said I, feeling as dismal as I daresay I looked. 'Do you know,' Westwood went on, 'her figure and walk always remind me of a Hindoo girl's, all over English as her face and hair are, with a touch of the tropical, you can't say where, about it—owing to her being born in

India, as I believe she was; and altogether, Ned, I'm glad to——' Here Westwood shrugged his shoulders, and I poured myself out another glass of grog in pure despair.

"'The truth is,' said I, 'I wish I had never *seen* that confounded *Seringapatam*! Didn't she say any—didn't you—in fact, Tom, what do you think of the matter, plump and plain, stem and stern?' said I manfully. 'Why,' said Tom, in a thoughtful way, 'not to set you at all wrong on either side, the thing that strikes me is, I don't think she ever once mentioned you, Ned, except in passing. But to my mind, in the circumstances, that's not so much against you. The young lady can say little when she pleases, I assure you; for only last night, in that fine moonlight, we happened to touch on that affair in the river—you know?' 'Yes,' I said, for it wasn't easy to forget. 'Now I always thought that night a turning-point with you,' Westwood said; 'and it was the last night you were aboard; so I spoke of you a good deal, and never a word did Miss Violet utter, save "Yes" and "No," while her face being in the shadow, I couldn't see it. Oh, by-the-by, though,' continued he, 'she *did* say one thing!'

"'For Heaven's sake, what was it?' I broke out eagerly. 'Well, then, Ned,' answered he, leaning back on the two back legs of his chair, and eyeing me with a comical air, which surprised me a little; 'do you consider yourself good-looking?' I started up. 'What do you mean by that, Tom?' said I; but next moment I sat down again with a sulky 'No, I'll be hanged if I do! so——' 'No more does your lady-love, then,' said Westwood, 'for she made the remark very coolly, and even without my asking her—but don't be down-hearted at that, my dear Ned, for I think more of that little sentence, in the way it was said, than of all she did *not* say!' 'The greater the difference between us, I suppose,' said I savagely. 'Why,' replied Tom, 'tis my conviction you never hear a woman say the man she likes is handsome—and from a perverse young gipsy like——' 'Well, by Jove! Westwood,' said I, losing my temper altogether, and giving the table a slap with my fist that sent my glass crash to the deck, 'you beat everything! I suppose if she'd called me a fool and a blessed lubber, you'd turn it to my favour. But the truth is, I don't understand your niceties—I want something broad and above-board, that a fellow can lay hold of—and the short

and the long of it is——' With that I laid my face on my arms down in the spilt grog on the table, and fairly groaned. My head reeled till I scarce knew it was myself that was sitting there, as all of a sudden one thought after another crowded on me. Somehow I seemed for a single moment to be out and out in the open sea, the different faces I'd seen along the ship's bulwarks rushing past me, with Jones's face, and the look of the Indiaman in the sunset; through all sorts of weather, too, in that confounded moment.

"Then, I can't say why, but my hair crept as I came back to the thought of the Indiaman and the schooner in the calm at the time, and I almost fancied I heard a whisper at my ear. I looked up, and saw Tom Westwood sitting opposite me, with a musing air, and rather melancholy. The sight of my wild stare, with the grog I suppose trickling down my forehead, and dripping off my nose, appeared to startle him, and our eyes met queerly enough for half-a-minute—till all at once the notion seemed to strike both of us, of the absurdity of two fellows hobnobbing and lackadaisying away this fashion in a hole of a schooner's cabin, thousands of miles from land; and I'm blessed if we didn't both burst at the same moment into regular roars of laughter—first one broadside, then 'bout ship, as it were, to deliver the other, gun after gun. By George! though, I felt it do me good, as if something deadly went off with it. 'Hallo!' sung out the planter, blocking up the moonlight that shone misty-white down the steps of the companion, to a blue glimmer at the foot of them; 'both surviving *yet*, I declare'; and we felt the scent of his cheroot in the hot calm as he walked aft again.

"'Well, Ned,' said Westwood, still laughing, 'there's one thing more I *did* contrive to get out, and it is certainly broad enough to lay hold of, as you say. Do you know, from some hints the judge let drop in course of the passage, after he got to know me, I have a rather sharp suspicion he has someone in view for his daughter already!' At this I gasped once more. 'Whether she knows it herself or not, I'm not sure,' added Tom; 'but, very naturally, the gentleman I mean was often enough mentioned in Sir Charles's cabins—for who do you imagine, of all persons in the world, it is?'

"I made no trial at a guess, but sat eyeing Westwood in perfect silence, and he went on—'Who but—don't look so

fierce, my dear fellow—just this—this said nabob of an uncle of mine, the Bengal Councillor! Why, you've no conception,' said Westwood, 'what presents of pearl necklaces, fans, cashmere shawls, and China ivory work-boxes, and so on, the Councillor must have sent home to her at different times, for the *Seringapatam* to bring back again. I didn't see her wear any of them; but every now and then Sir Charles would point to something that lay about, telling me it came from my uncle! He is a bachelor, you know, not so old as Sir Charles himself, who isn't so old as he looks, and they seem to be sworn friends!' 'Tuts, man!' said I, brightening a bit, 'can't you see he wants to adopt her?' 'So I should have imagined,' answered Westwood; 'but the fact is, two or three times, as I told you, Sir Charles Hyde hinted as much as that it was an idea of long standing between himself and his friend the Councillor, so——' 'The old villain!' I roared. 'Begging your pardon, Westwood—but I must say you are the pattern of a Job's comforter, and no mistake!' 'Well,' answered he, 'if you had heard the way in which the young lady mentioned my uncle to me, you wouldn't be much afraid of your rival, Ned. Why, she said she thought she remembered him when she was a little girl, bringing her Indian sweetmeats from the bazaar in his carriage—she actually supposed he must be older than her father, when the judge set her right eagerly enough—but, you must know, he no more seems able to say a sharp word to *her*, than Jacobs yonder would. So what did she say next, after apparently thinking a little, but that, now she recollected, my uncle used to have gray hair and white whiskers, like Mr Rollock, which for my part I knew no more about than the table, when her father broke out describing him as warmly as possible; and suddenly Miss Hyde looked at him with a little turn of her pretty lip, and a twinkle in her eye, that sent the old gentleman fiddling about his coffee-cup, and stopped him in a moment as if she had been a little witch!'

"'What's to be done, Tom?' I faltered out, after a long stop. 'I'm sure I don't know, Ned,' said he gravely; 'let's go on deck at any rate, for it's too hot here to sleep.' The moment the sight of the calm burst upon us, however, with the two vessels together in the midst of it, in the hazy sort of moonlight, the same notion seemed to strike both of us in a

different way. 'I'll tell you what, Collins,' said Westwood, half-jokingly, half in earnest, 'uncle though he be, if you can contrive to cut out the Councillor anyhow, I'll forgive you, for one!' 'How, though—*how*, by Jove!' replied I—'if they go to Bombay in the Indiaman, by the time they reach Calcutta, I shall be in the Pacific!' "'Tis a difficult case,' said Westwood, 'no doubt. And even suppose you had the opportunity, 'twould be hard to manage an elopement ashore in India, travelling "dauk" in two palanquins. Seriously speaking, Ned, I see nothing for it but to wait till you come *back* from the Pacific.'

"I looked hopelessly round: the calm and heat together gave one a helpless feeling, and every notion of an active sort appeared desperate. A perfect calm it was, too: there was some filmy scum of a haze aloft, that served to spread the moonlight all over, shutting out the shape of the sky, and softening off the horizon; with the moon standing slant up in it, like a brighter spot, and a few stars low down in the east. But for the long wide tremble of the water, in fact, as it glanced up with a blue flicker, you'd have fancied we mightn't be far from land; while the big Indiaman lay off the schooner's bow, without the least motion one could see; the moonshine edging round her spars and ropes from the other side, and her sails hanging shadowy against it, except below, under her brailed-up courses, where the masts, the thick of the rigging, and the tops of her deck-lumber, glistened as if they were newly wet. Half of her watch were on the bowsprit, sending out a 'fished' spritsail-yard, the same we had set dangling about their ears that afternoon, and we could hear them speaking plain enough; every time they sang out at a haul, it went far away on all sides—ho-ho-ho-he-ho-ho—till you lost it in the dead calm, as if somebody had gone there. Now and then the *Seringapatam* made a slight plunge by the head, as the wide soft swell floated up with her; and the glossy black shadow, that seemingly gave her hull the height of a tower, came wavering in quicksilver circles to our very cutwater, while the lights from her after-windows went twisting away round her heavy counter to the moonshine, like yellow snakes; the schooner all the time lying as quiet as if she were on a pond, except that by little and little she kept shifting her bearings to the Indiaman, and things were

confoundedly like our both sticking together in course of the morning, if the calm held. I went forward to the forecabin and desired Jones to get all hands down into the boats, and have her towed off to safe distance, seeing that the worst of it would be sure to fall to our share.

"This was doing, and we drew slowly off the ship's bow, where her men coolly knocked off working to watch ours, and pass jokes on our gang of Lascars, as they handled the oars in awkward style; in fact, by the way the Indiaman's watch carried on, most of them seemed to have passed the grog-can pretty freely, being Saturday night, which we could hear they were still keeping up below in the forecabin, when our quarter came abreast of her larboard bow. 'Hurrah!' said one, waving his tarpaulin; and 'Pull, you beggars!' roared another; when my old customer, ugly Harry, all at once leant out of her forechains, and sung out to Jones, who was next him in the stern-sheets of our gig: 'I say, mate, so ye're clearing off, are ye? The better for that 'ere nutshell of a schooner o' yours, I reckon!' Jones made no answer, and the fellow added; 'Come aboard when you've got a safe berth, anyhow, and drink "sweethearts and wives," will ye?' I saw Jones start, and turn his face fiercely into the shadow of the ship's main-course on the water, rising half-up with one fist clenched, but he said nothing. 'Oh, you're blasted proud!' Foster called out: 'you forgets a man, blow me! D'ye think I doesn't know a fellow I got glorious with myself, in old Van Stinkoff's, at Cape Town? Sink me, mates,' said he, as loud as before, turning round on the rail of the bulwarks to the rest, 'I picked him out o' the street scuppers, under the sign of the Flying Dutchman, an' I'm blowed if I didn't think it beneath me at the time!' Here the end of our main-boom opened us in sight of the ugly ruffian, and he was sinking down inboard, when I hailed the Indiaman's quarterdeck, where the Scotch mate was to be seen. 'Ay, ay, the schooner ahoy!' sung out he, coming to the gangway. 'Did you hear that man's impertinence, sir,' said I sternly, 'to my officer on duty there? I expect you to see him punished, sir.' The Scotchman said he'd inquire into it; but shortly after he came back, saying he 'doubted' he couldn't be sure of the man; and, at any rate, he could have 'meant no ill.' The boats had towed us by this time almost out of fair hearing,

but Harry Foster was to be seen coolly eyeing us from the midst of his watchmates, as he slung a couple of blocks over his shoulder; when he turned away with as much indifference as if we had been a Thames collier, growling some two or three words or other that brought a loud laugh from the Indiaman's forecastle to her bowsprit, where the men were turning lazily to their business again.

"Being now clear off the ship, with the rake of her hull in our command if I chose, and free of her broadside at the same time, I hailed the boats to leave off towing and come aboard. As Jones came on deck, I saw that in his face to make me think he took the thing to heart, seeing he met my first look with his lips set together and a steady gleam of his eyes. The truth was, I never in my life came across a man that struck me so much with the notion of his having a devil in him, seeking to get the better of what was good.

"‘I think we shall do, Mr Jones?’ I said. ‘Quite safe, sir,’ said he, quietly; at that moment, standing as we did out of earshot, with the setting moon in sight past the Indiaman, shining in a rusty yellow glare to her hanging sails, ’twas strange how the odds of our different stations passed off. We were foot to foot, in fact; I was fully aware, if never before, what an enemy Jones would make—he had great daring and knowingness in him, and all on the wrong side of the hedge for me at the time, seeing I had such a ticklish part to play with the Indiaman. I caught myself, on the instant, measuring youth and activity, not to say regular breeding to the service, and a clear conscience besides, against him and his thews and sinews; but as for turning and twisting with the man before me, I saw it was the tack likely to throw him to windward of me. My voice changed, and I lowered it as I said: ‘Mr Jones, I happened to sail half the voyage as a passenger in that ship, and I’ve no common reason to be anxious about her getting safe into port. There’s one single being in her at this moment I’d willingly lose my life to save from anything like what one could fancy—ay, so help me God, suppose I’d no chance of ever setting eyes on her again!’ Jones never stirred a feature, but looked past me into the gleam of the moon over my shoulder.

"‘Well, Mr Jones,’ I said, ‘I’ll acknowledge to you frankly, as from one seaman to another, the question is, Are you for me

—or *not*?' 'We speak as man with man, it seems, Mr Collins!' said Jones quietly; 'then I am—*for* you!' and he struck his hand all at once into mine; 'here's a hand that never lied, whatever the tongue may have done—bad or good; I am for you, sir, and no more of it! I knew as well as if you'd told me, Mr Collins, by the looks of the passengers, that you had sailed aboard that ship in some way or other—and what's more, sir, I *saw*——' here he stopped, looking at me with his back to the sinking gleam of light beyond the ship's hull, from the moon as she touched the water, and I saw nothing but the shape of his head under the straw hat, with a shadow blurring his face together, though I felt him eyeing me out of it all the time—'what some would think more worth while than if you were a Spanish plate-ship,' he went on; and he lowered his voice nearly to a whisper as he added, 'I tell you what, Mr Collins, 'tis my conviction that, *if you chose*, you might do what you liked in the end with that Indiaman and *all* aboard her!' I stepped back with a shiver through me, as the sudden setting of the moon blended everything black in with Jones's shoulders, leaving his head instead of her against a glimmer of light, till for a moment it seemed peering at me off the horizon with the whole lump of shadow betwixt the two craft for a body; and I must say I thought of old stories about the Tempter in human form. 'Devil!' said I hoarsely, while the last gleam to westward went out, and it got so dark I could have fancied Jones had vanished from the bulwarks without stirring a foot; in fact, on my moving to the place I touched the cool planks with my hand—he was actually gone! Nothing was visible beyond our own decks, save a slight glimmer such as one would make in sculling with a single oar; and I saw at once he had taken the small boat alongside to go aboard the Indiaman! All the rest was that thick heavy darkness only to be found in a calm in the Indian Ocean, towards morning: you may not only say you see it, but could stir it, as it were, with a stick.

"A horrid notion of Jones's purpose crept through my mind at first; but on second thoughts I easily saw this wasn't the occasion for him to choose, if he had really meant ill, and accordingly there was more the reason to trust him. Indeed, as I stood listening and watching, after Westwood and the planter went below, the Indiaman's binnacle lamp seemed to

go slowly out, while at the same time the sound of her watch speaking on the forecastle apparently got distincter, till I could hear them clear of the ship's hull and rigging, like low voices muttering in the air betwixt her and us. 'Twas only her having sheered gradually bow-on to the schooner again, however, as a calm near the equator has always something like a *pulse* in it—but it struck me there were men out on her jib-boom, which being of course the very privatest part of any in a ship for talk—why, to find more than one going out there, of a dark night, and with no work to do, never looks otherwise than suspicious. Nothing of this kind surprised me at present in the *Seringapatam*, with the opinion I had of her; but the curious thing was, that the fellows must have supposed it the farthest point they could get out of sight of us, as well as from their own decks, she having had her beam to the schooner when the moon set.

“The desperate feelings that steal upon a man in such a case, and the fearful notions that breed in his head, with the quickness of his senses and the way he holds on by a single rope, you can scarcely conceive, though if a cry had come from the Indiaman at that moment I daresay I should have sprung in head foremost to get to her, when all at once, from up in the air again, I thought I heard the smart click of a flint and steel; at any rate, I saw the sparks showering from it in the midst of the black space before me—even the pair of fists as they knocked together, then a mouth blowing the match, till there was a light in a lantern between four heads leaning towards each other over the spar. Queer enough it would have been to see, in ordinary circumstances, but you'll readily fancy what a thing it looked all of a sudden, right out in the midst of the pitch-black night, one didn't know how or where—in fact, two of them faced each other in the stream of light from one side of the lantern, like the two edges of a rent in the dark, and another was like a sprawling blot in the centre—you just saw they were faces and heads, with a foot or two of the thick round boom slanting up betwixt them; but as for their bodies, they were all of a piece with the perfect blackness beyond. I could see one of them hold up the lantern and pass it round the three others' faces, bringing out their chins and noses, as if to be sure who they were—a piece of caution which served almost equally well for me, for

I remembered each of them by headmark amongst the crew, only I didn't see the said fellow himself, even when he drew out some paper or other in one hand, seemingly unfolded it with the help of his teeth, and spread it over the jib-boom under the lantern, whereupon the whole four of the heads drew close together in a black lump round the light, peering down upon the paper, and muttering away as much at their ease, no doubt, as if they'd been in a tap-room. All I wished for was a good rifle-barrel in my hand at the time, to have knocked the light out from the midst of them, and sent the bullet by accident through the tarpaulin hat behind it—especially when a glaring red flipper was shoved out on the white paper, and the thumb planted steadily on a particular spot. All at once, however, the light was put out in the lantern, and I heard them going in-board, as the noise of the morning watch being called, at four o'clock, got up round the fore-hatchway.

CHAPTER XXVII

“IN about half-an-hour the faint glimmer of Jones's oar in the water showed how hard it was to find the schooner again; however, he managed to get aboard at last, by which time I was walking carelessly past the binnacle in the dark, and as soon as he sought me out and began to speak, I saw it was all right. Mr Snelling came on deck to his watch, blowing up the men for letting out the only light aboard, as he didn't know fore-and-aft from 'thwart-ships, nor north from south. The cabin lamp under the skylight had gone out too for want of oil, without being noticed as long as the moon shone, and not even the planter's cheroot was to be seen. From the snatches of their conversation he had time to gather, I agreed with Jones that, whatever the four fellows on the jib-boom might have intended beforehand, their present cue wasn't at all to try seizing the ship; in fact, the schooner's sudden appearance in this latitude, with what they knew of her before, had naturally enough brought out a number of the crew in different colours to what they'd stick to after getting a fright and finding their mistake—though by this time I had no doubt in my own mind that the villain who bent on his silk

neckerchief to the signal halliards in that hurry the afternoon before actually meant it for the *black flag*, while the absurdity of an Indiaman *striking* at all to a cruiser that wanted her just to heave-to, was a sign how most of the crew's minds went, as long as they fancied us pirates. However, Jones had seen sufficient of the lantern affair on the boom to explain it to my great relief; the ringleader of them, no other I was sure than ugly Harry himself, seemed to scrub trousers ordinarily for one of the quarterdeck officers, and had got hold of an old chart in his berth that same evening, which the four had come out there to get a private overhaul of. All Jones could get room to see was that it was a chart of some islands, with a particular mark at one of them, on which the fellow with the lantern put his thumb, when another asked if there weren't any trees on it. 'Trees, ay, trees enough to hang all the blasted lubbers afloat!' said the first, as Jones listened. 'I'd as soon think of sailing in a craft without spars as aboard a dazart ileyand without trees!' One was tired of the Indiaman, another sick of the world, and a third, with Jack down on the bowsprit, wanted to chase buffaloes and shoot birds. As for the rest, the head of the gang assured his mates there were plenty of other islands not far off, and natives in them; whereupon the light was put out, and, in short, they made it up amongst them to take one of the ship's boats quietly some night as soon as she got in the latitude of the Maldives, and steer for this said island; although, in case of their being dogged about by the schooner, of which the chief scoundrel seemed, by Jones's account, to have a wholesome fear, it wouldn't be so easy a matter. Indeed the last words he was heard to say, as they crept inward down the boom, were to the effect that he thought there were *some aboard* as anxious to drop the cruiser as they were. 'Faith, Mr Jones,' said I, glad to find this was what they wanted, 'if that's all, I shan't stand in their way—so as soon as the breeze springs up, we'd better clear off altogether. The smoothest way is to let them take themselves quietly off and I've no fear of the ship—only, before fairly shaping our own course for Bengal, we must manage to have another sight of her under full sail for Bombay!'

"Neither of us thought of turning in, for by the next half-

hour, in fact, the Indiaman's hull and canvas began to blacken out of the gloom on one side—the blue of the water spread round till it glittered against the ring of light kindling and kindling on the horizon, till it rose seemingly in a perfect fire at one spot in the rim of it, blazing up toward the cool blue aloft; then the sun was out. As long as we had to stick to your niceties and fine manners, in fact, I felt as much afraid of meeting Violet herself as a country booby would—I'll be hanged if I wasn't in doubt of her cutting me dead, suppose I met her, and I shouldn't have had a word to say; whereas with a spice of the rough work I thought of all night, or even a chance of something desperate behind, why, a fellow needn't to mind much how he went about it—seeing that in the midst of a hubbub the words come into your mouth of themselves, and you're not expected to stand upon ceremony.

“The Scotch mate, being now first officer, had the side-ropes handed us civilly enough, having just seen the decks washed down in his own thorough manner, carronades, ropes, and all; but as the captain wasn't turned out yet, I went up the poop, where a couple of boys were still swabbing up the wet. The moment I reached it, the sight of the only two passengers that were out so early, rather took me aback, one of them being the last I cared to meet—namely, the Irish Brigadier's lady, who was walking the deck in pattens, the boys evidently keeping clear of her with their swabs; and the stout red-faced Brigadier himself, buttoned up to the throat, while he stalked dismally fore-and-aft with her on his arm. At the first glimpse of me, General Brady stopped short and stared—I daresay he was doubtful whether to call me out or not. ‘Glad to *say* you again, sir!’ said he. ‘Well, now,’ said his lady, ‘you're the very man I wanted to see!’ I still looked at her, unable to say the like of herself, but terrified to speak a wrong word, with the knowledge of her confounded temper: the Brigadier had planted himself betwixt me and the poop-stairs, and never having fairly come across her since the affair about her dog and the shark, why, absurd as it was, I didn't know what the woman might make of my connection with the same craft that carried her off so soon after.

“‘Yes, indeed, and 'twas foolish of me not to see it in ye at first!’ she went on, shaking her parasol at me in a knowing way, and eyeing the schooner again. ‘Howiver, *I heard of*

you!’ said she, with another look that set me all alive, ‘and a mighty bold sort of admirer you are!’ ‘Faith, sir,’ said the Brigadier, ‘if I’d commanded the batthery down there last night, I’d have waited till ye got nearer, and blown you out of the wather.’ ‘’Tis only a lieutenant you are?’ said his lady, speaking without scruple in the midst of his words, and frowning him quiet. ‘Nothing more, ma’am,’ I said. ‘Well, now, Mister Lieutenant,’ said the lady suddenly, ‘what d’ye mean to do? You didn’t find us out here, I suppose, and actually take these cowardly ship-people of ours by sayge-like a bold fellow, for nothing?’ After a few words more, Mrs Brady all of a sudden vanished down the little quarter-gallery stair near the ship’s taffrail; though I had scarce missed her ere she appeared again, making me a signal. ‘Hush, now!’ said she in a whisper out of the stairway, ‘and step after me like a cat amongst broken bhottles, for he’s shaving yonder just now on the opposite side—I saw his kitmagar taking in the hot water. Next moment I had followed her into the small state-room in the larboard quarter, where she opened an inner door and left me. By Jove! I could have hugged that Irishwoman on the spot, vixen as she was—no matter though the very ship might be out of sight in a few hours, and I never set eyes on her again; I thought no more of it at the moment than I did of her skipper waiting for me—everything was lost in the notion of seeing Violet Hyde’s face come out of that door. All the time there was a whispering, a rustling, and a confusion in the berth, as if she were taken by surprise, naturally enough—then I caught a word or two of the young lady’s own, that made me think it was all up.

“The door-handle turned, and the door half opened, then it shut to again, and I heard Mrs Brady’s voice in a coaxing sort of strain, till at last she opened the door wide and said: ‘Then you won’t, my dear? So Mister Lieutenant what’s-his-name,’ added she, ‘you may be off to your vessel, and——’ Suddenly I saw Violet’s figure shrinking back, as it were, behind the Brigadier’s lady, into the berth; but all at once she walked straight out to the state-room, half frowning and half laughing, with an angry kind of blush all over her face. Her hair was only looped up on the side, and braided on the other, as if it weren’t rightly ship-shape yet for the day; while as for

her dress, I remember nothing except its being some brown cloak or other wrapped so close about her that one couldn't even see her hands, like the picture of a nun. 'Mrs Brady seems so astonished to see you here again, Mr Collins,' said she, rather sharply, as I thought, 'that she cannot rest without all the passengers meeting you, I suppose, before you go?' With that she looked back, but Mrs Brady had walked out, though I heard the young lady's waiting-girl moving about inside the berth yet. 'Twas all an accident, my happening to come on board just now, Miss Hyde,' said I, anxiously, 'or, indeed, my having orders to speak the Indiaman at all!' 'Ah!' she answered—'and it was so strange of Mrs Brady to—to persist!' The lovely girl had scarce condescended to look at me yet, but here she glanced past me through the quarter-gallery window at the schooner, where there was nothing betwixt her and the gay little state-room save the blue heaving water and the light—then her eye seemed to pass from the epaulet on my shoulder to the other that had none, till it lighted for the first time on my face, with a smile.

"How beautiful your schooner looks just now, Mr Collins!" said she, turning hastily again; 'it is the—the same that—that we saw before?' Now there was something in those blue eyes of hers, with the dark lashes over them and under them, that made me lose sight at the moment of everything in the way of my success, fear and all—a sort of a flying glance it was, that I couldn't help turning to my favour. 'For God's sake, Miss Hyde,' said I, 'let me have something one way or other to know my fate by—it's no use telling my mind after all that's come and gone; but as I mayn't see you again—and the breeze will be up directly—why——' Violet stood all the while gazing down on the state-room carpet, making no answer: there was a dead stop, and I heard the first ripple of the breeze work against the ship's rudder below—by Jove! I could have hanged myself at that moment—when I saw her shoulder tremble as she looked down, her soft eyelids just lifted till I caught the blue of her eye, and the smile came over her lip. How I got hold of her hand—for that confounded cloak, or whatever it was, I really don't know; but so it was, and out I came with the words, 'Violet—I love you to the last drop of my blood, that's all!' I said; 'and I only wish I had the chance of showing it!' Violet Hyde drew

her hand gently out of mine, and looked me straight in the face for a moment with a merry sort of a quizzical air, as if I meant some other adventure—and ‘Oh no! I hope not!’ added she, with a shudder, and then a blush, no doubt thinking of the African river.

“‘But Violet, Violet!’ said I, eagerly, as she made a move toward the nearest door, ‘won’t you say, then—*something*, for Heaven’s sake, to keep one in hope?’ ‘Why, what would you have, sir?’ said she, quickly, still turning away—but bless me! I don’t exactly remember what followed, in the desperation I felt—nor how near she was to me when I heard her begging me to ‘go, go, if I really loved her!’ ‘Dearest girl!’ I said, ‘I shall be far enough off in a short time!’ ‘Do you actually sail so soon, then?’ said Violet, in a low voice. ‘Why, they’re bracing round the ship’s yards already, I hear,’ answered I; ‘but indeed I think the schooner might keep near for a few days, too——’ ‘No—no!’ said she anxiously, ‘go altogether, else my father will be still more set against—against—— Perhaps,’ she added, ‘we may see you in Calcutta, when—you are’—and her eye glanced from one shoulder of my uniform to the other. ‘When I’ve got my epaulet shifted to the right shoulder?’* asked I, eagerly; ‘then may I see you?’ ‘See—yes,’ was the whisper I caught—and ‘Dearest, *dearest* Violet,’ said I, almost going down on the deck before her, ‘suppose I manage to ship them on *both*, in this confounded peace, will you——’ ‘Hush!’ said Violet, listening, and all in a flutter, ‘indeed you must go, else *I* must!’ ‘For God’s sake, Violet,’ I went on, keeping hold of her hand as she tried to get away, ‘will you wait a year or two and give me the chance of a war in China—or up the Mediterranean—or——’ But here the wild notions I had for a moment left me.

“Somehow or other at that instant a terrible glimpse, as it were, of Bonaparte standing up on the crag in St Helena flashed across me; and as the folly of the thing, let alone the impudence of it, struck me, I nigh-hand groaned, while Violet Hyde’s fingers slipped out of mine. Just then she turned full round with a soft look of her eyes, and was going to say

* At that period the distinguishing mark of a commander, as the epaulet on the *left* shoulder, of a lieutenant, and the epaulet on *both*, of a post-captain.

something, as I thought; but the handle of the aftermost door turned, and the Brigadier's lady hastened in. As I glanced round, something or other dropped lightly into the palm of my hand, and next moment Violet was gone. 'Twas only a little knot of white ribbon I'd got, though the scent and the warm touch of it together were enough to startle one—I almost thought she'd changed into it; and to this day, ma'am, I'll be hanged if I know what *that* was the scent of—unless it was sandal wood!

“‘Quick!’ said Mrs Brady, in a hurry, ‘what d’ye stand staring there for, man alive? Sir Charles is upstairs, and you can’t go this way; so through the cabins with ye, lieutenant, and out on the quarter-deck!’ Before I well knew what I was doing, accordingly, we were in the judge’s main-cabin, where the ship’s masts and the men gathering about the ropes could be seen through the round-house doors as they stood open. ‘Mrs Brady,’ said I, suddenly stepping back to her, ‘you’re an angel, ma’am, and——’ ‘You unprincipled young villain ye!’ said she, springing aft with her fingers spread, and begining to raise her voice, ‘what would ye do! Brigadier!—D’ye think ’tis deaf I was in the stair yonder, you promiscuous young——’ However, I gave her one bewildered look, and heard no more of it, bolting as I did through the nearest door right against the man coming to the wheel; while the midshipman was on the look-out for me everywhere to say that the captain of the Indiaman was waiting for me below in his cabin.

“Indeed she was moving slowly through the water already, as the light cat’s-paws ruffled it here and there, and drew aloft into her royals; our own little craft beginning to slip gently along to leeward of the ship, with the dark Lascars’ faces under the foot of her white fore-topmast-staysail, giving her a doubtful enough air, I must own. I had nothing particular to say to Finch, in fact; but, captain as he was of the Indiaman for the time, ’twas the least I could do to see him; besides that somehow or other, I had a sort of feeling as I came on board half-an-hour before, I couldn’t exactly say why, that made one anxious for a near sight of him. If he suspected anything wrong amongst his crew, why at any rate he would have an opportunity of mentioning it ere we parted company; but, awkward as our meeting

each other again was, of course, and both being on such different footing from before, while my own mind was naturally full of what had just happened, it turned out much as might be expected. Finch was evidently not the same man he had been a few weeks before, except in his puppy fine gentleman manners and way of dress, which were twice as high-flown; with his hair curled, a white handkerchief hanging half out of his breast-pocket, a regular East India uniform, and everything showing the tiptop skipper. The thing that set me less at my ease with him was, that I was sure, by one glance of his eye, he had a pretty fair guess of where I had been last, and saw it in my manner—which made me the more careful, as matters stood, to give no signs of more meddling with the Indiaman. However, I threw in a hint or two, when Finch out and told me quite frankly, there *had* been a little disorderly conduct on board after they left the Cape, but he had thoroughly put it down, without letting the passengers know anything about it, as he said: only, the very day before, at the time when the schooner fired, there were a few of the men, he told me, that seemed inclined to disobey orders—fellows he wished he could get rid of.

“‘Now, Captain Finch,’ said I, as I looked over my shoulder at them from the capstan, ‘will you point out the men you spoke of, sir, that showed themselves mutinous?’ Finch drew back at this, however, and hummed and hawed at the word. ‘Yes, *mutinous*,’ repeated I; ‘there’s no use mincing the matter, I suppose. Just be so good as let me see the fellows, and I’ll rid you of them at once!’ Finch’s glance followed mine as it lighted on Harry Foster’s shaggy head watching us with the eye of a buffalo, past a knot of slouching, hulking, foremastmen of his own kidney. The moment I caught sight of Jacobs’ broad, hearty, brown face, standing apart a bit with his friends, Tom, Bill, the red-haired Irish topman, and three other honest-like man-o’-war’s-men, I took my cue for the meantime. ‘My lads,’ said I, walking quietly forward, ‘I want a few hands for the *Hebe* frigate—you know her, I daresay—and that’s enough; for a model like the *Hebe* doesn’t float the water—now, I can’t press any of you!’ Here a general laugh ran along both rows, and I heard a growling chuckle from ugly Foster. ‘But,’ added I, laughing too, ‘you can *volunteer*!’

"There was a dead silence, in the midst of which Tom, the fore-topman, the most dashing fellow in the ship, stepped aft with his hat in his hand, then Jacobs, then Bill, and my acquaintance the 'Savage,' then the three others. In place of grumbling, in fact, there began to be a hurrah amongst the rest, except some of Foster's chums; a few more seemed inclined to follow, and as for my gentleman captain, he appeared not to know what to do. 'Now, my man,' said I, stepping straight up to ugly Harry, and eyeing him right in the face as he stood, 'you're a fine seaman-like fellow—true-blue, I'm sure—I've taken a particular fancy to ye—won't you ship for the *Hebe*—eh?' Foster didn't know where to look, twisting himself round, hitching up his trousers, and altogether taken fairly aback; every eye was on him, and I'll be hanged if I don't think he turned it in his mind to agree. 'Come, Foster,' said I, in a low voice, 'I know you, my man, but if you ship I'll look over the whole!' All at once Captain Finch walked up to me, saying, 'If you persist in taking these men, sir, you'll have to answer for it, I can tell you!' 'I know my own meaning, sir,' said I firmly; 'I am in the regular course, and answer for it I will! Say the word, my man, and ship?' said I again. 'Blowed if I do!' said Harry, turning on his heel with a grim scowl; 'none o' yer frigates for me!' and he walked off. Jacobs and the others came on the gangway with their bags, however, and pitched them to the men in the boat, without anyone offering to interfere; indeed, Finch had seemingly given it up sooner than I expected.

"'Now, Captain Finch,' said I, before stepping over the side after Mr Snelling and the men, 'I'd much rather we could have hit upon the right men; however, the more need for my keeping in sight of you to windward, as I shall do at least till we steer for the Bay of Bengal. I couldn't do less, you see,' added I, on getting no answer, 'than make myself strong enough to help you if needful!' 'I shall report to the Admiral at Bombay, sir!' said he fiercely. 'You may do that, Captain Finch,' I said, 'as soon as possible; but, in the meantime, you can't be sure of what may turn up of a dark night, and a couple of lights at your main-yardarm, or anywhere, will bring the schooner down in half-an-hour or so if there's a breeze. As for a calm,' said I, turning round—but

such a strange white look had come over Finch's face as he glanced after me, that, thinking he was beside himself with rage, I went down the side without another word. 'Take your own way!' I fancied I heard him mutter betwixt his teeth; but next moment we were pulling off.

"Well, the breeze ere this time was steady, though light, and we drew gradually to windward of the Indiaman, till by the afternoon the white band on her hull was just awash with the water, and there I kept her, with a little variety, pretty near the whole night, and most of the following day.

"The next night came almost as dark as it had been that night of the calm; but the breeze freshened again pretty strong, and accordingly I kept the schooner down to get nearer the ship, which we had seen in the first dog-watch dead to leeward. I was rather uneasy for a while at not being able to make out her lights, and we slipped fast through the water, when all at once both Jones and Westwood called out from forward that they saw them, and I walked to the bows.

"'All right,' said I, 'but, no, by heaven! 'That's the signal I named to the captain! Set stunsails, Mr Jones, and make her walk, for God's sake!' *Two* lights it was aloft in the gloom, right to leeward as before: there was something wrong, or else she wanted to speak us; so away we flew before the wind, under everything that could be set. I looked and looked, when a thought struck me; not another light was to be seen below, and they weren't high enough from the heave of the sea for even a ship's lower mast.

"'Yes, by George!' said I hurriedly to Westwood and Jones, 'that's a *trick*! The fellow means to give us the slip. Clap the helm down, Mr Snelling, and haul aft the sheets there—luff, luff!' We were losing our weather-gage; in fact, the Indiaman must actually be to windward of us ere then, and if the breeze freshened we might lose them altogether. The thing that troubled me most was, that I couldn't believe the man had thought of such a plan himself; and if he once took a hint from any of the scoundrels I knew were aboard, why, there was no saying what might be the upshot in the end. Finch was a common enough character at bottom; but with such notions as I was sure were working in his head about Miss Hyde, one step might lead him on to another, till any chance occasion might make a desperate villain of him,

especially if he suspected myself of aught like good fortune with the young lady. It wasn't much past midnight, the air was wonderfully heavy and sweltering, and the swell going down, when we heard a murmur amongst the men on the fore-castle, and saw a red fire-ball pass high over to nor'ard for half-a-minute, leaving a trail in the dark sky beyond the headsails.

"A queer ghastly sort of ruddy gray streak opened out in the black of the horizon, where some of them thought they made out the ship; but soon after we could hear a low hollow kind of a hum, rushing as it were from east to west, till it grew almost like the sound of waves on a beach; which made us begin to look to ourselves. There was a bright line of light directly in the opposite quarter, and the sea far away seemed getting on fire, with a noise and hubbub coming along below, that nobody appeared to know the meaning of; while aloft it was as still as a church. For a moment I saw the *Seringapatam* quite plainly several miles off; but from the confusion, I never could say whether it was north or east; in fact, we kept watching the canvas, expecting to have a hurricane into it next minute. Suddenly the sea came gleam-gleaming and flickering on, as it were, with a washing bubble and a hissing smother of foam, till it splashed right against our larboard bulwarks, heaping up like perfect fire upon the schooner's side, and running past both stern and bows, away with a long rolling flash to the other horizon. All was pitch-dark again after that, and a whisper went about our decks and round the binnacle lamp of 'The ripples!—It's the ripples!'* 'Nothing more, sir!' said Jones, even he seemingly taken by surprise at first. Twice again we had it, though each time fainter, right out of the midst of the gloom; after which it was as calm as before. 'Thank God!' said I, breathing hard, 'we'll have that Indiaman in the morning, at any rate!' 'Why, sir,' answered Jones, thoughtfully, 'after this we are likely to have the south-west monsoon upon us ere long—'tis just the place and the season for it.'

"And so it was. Instead of sighting the *Seringapatam* at daybreak, I had a strong suspicion she had gone to eastward; but of course the faster the schooner was, why if it were the

* The "Ripples"—a marine phenomenon peculiar, apparently, to the Indian Ocean.

wrong way we should only get from her the farther, and miss her altogether, without ever knowing how matters went, even if she got quietly into port ; so, being the best plan I could think of for the meantime, away we drove north-westward, sweeping the horizon with the glass every morning. We had run so far, indeed, without success, that I was sure she couldn't be ahead ; when one day I asked Mr Jones to bring me up the chart for those parts, as we took the latitude. We were a long way to westward of our own course at the time, and Jones's finger went along eastward till it stopped right upon the Maldivé islands, while he looked up with a sudden sharp glance. 'By heaven,' said I, 'yes!—I forgot that story altogether—be so good as to send that man there, Jacobs, to me. Jacobs,' said I, 'which of the officers' clothes did that fellow Foster use to scrub lately, in the Indiaman?' Jacobs gave his hair a rub, recollected a moment, and answered, 'Why, sir, the captain's own.' 'Oh !' I said, 'well, that'll do, Jacobs'—and Jacobs walked forward again. 'Mr Jones,' said I, quickly, '*that* chart belonged to the captain!—I'll have a look at that said desert island, sir !' We found something answering to it on the chart ; and in a few minutes the schooner was bowling before the dregs of the monsoon to eastward.

"'At all events,' added I, 'we'll see if these vagabonds mean to keep their word and turn hermits—either we catch them there, Mr Jones, or else we must find that Indiaman, though she were in sight of Colibah * lighthouse !' Jones's eye lighted, and he turned his nostrils to the monsoon as if he snuffed it in ; in fact, he was that sort of man that needed somewhat out of the common way to keep him right."

CHAPTER XXVIII

"'NO, Westwood,' said I, 'it can't be the right one—nor any of these, indeed !' And on looking at the chart, which was one not meant for anything but navigation in open water, with the channels laid down clearly enough, but evidently rather offhand as to the islands, Jones himself

* Outside the harbour of Bombay.

seemed to get uncertain about the matter; partly owing to the short glimpse he'd had of the other chart, and partly to its being, as he thought, an old one made for a purpose, by a hand that knew the islands well. After two or three days' sail, we were getting into the thick of the Maldives, where the reefs and sandbanks stretching out on every side, and beginning to lap in upon each other, made it more and more dangerous work; but at any rate the islands we saw were either very small, or else low and muddy-like, with a few scrubby-looking cocoas upon them, like bulrushes growing out of a marsh. No runaway sailors would ever think of taking up their quarters hereabouts, even if we hadn't caught sight of a smoke now and then, and once of some native craft with a couple of brown mat-sails, and an out-rigger, that showed the clusters hereaway to have people about them. Besides, there was no pretext any Indiaman could have for steering near enough to such a jungle of mud and water, to give a boat the chance of making towards it with any certainty.

"I saw at once that the spot in question must lie tolerably for the course of a ship to Western India, otherwise they wouldn't have appeared so sure of their mark as Jones said they did. All this, at the same time, kept me the more bent on searching the matter out ere I did aught else, seeing that in fact the Indiaman's attempt to get rid of the schooner was the very thing likely to bring her on this track; fancying, as she would, that we were either in chase of her toward Bombay, or off on our own course again. Now, on the one hand, nothing could fit better for the said runaway scheme of Harry Foster's; and on the other hand, nothing would have pleased me more, and greatly eased my mind too, than to catch him and his chums on their spree ashore. The worst of it was, that I began to have my doubts of Jones again. He was the only man that could put us on the right scent; yet he seemed either to have lost it, or to have something creeping on his mind that made him unwilling to carry it out.

"'Mr Jones,' said I, as the schooner was hove-to, and he stood musing gloomily by the binnacle, with a glance now and then in at the compass, and out at the chart again, 'if you're at a loss now, sir, just say—and I shall try my own hand for want of a better!'

"'No, Lieutenant Collins!' answered he suddenly, in a

husky voice—‘no, sir, that’s not it, but—God help me! no, there’s no use standing against fate, I see. Whatever it costs me, Mr Collins,’ he went on firmly, ‘I’m with you to the end of it; but—there is something horrible about all this!’ ‘How! what do you mean?’ said I, startled by the difference in his manner, and the quiver of his lip. ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘as for the present matter, there may be nothing more in it than what I heard on the ship’s boom yonder. The truth is, I didn’t know at first but this cluster here might have been the one—though I see now there is only *one* island in the whole chain that can answer the description, and that is not here.’ With that he pointed to another piece of the chart, showing no more than a few spots upon the paper, not to speak of shades in it standing for reefs and shoals, towards the ‘Head’ of the Maldives; one spot lying away from the rest, with the single name of Minicoy for them all. I asked him hastily enough what it was called, and all about it, for the whole affair made me more and more uneasy; but on this point Jones seemed inclined to keep close, plainly not liking the topic, except that I found it went by several names, one of which I had heard before myself—White-water Island.

“About the time I was a boy in a merchantman’s forecandle, ’twas a sort of floating yarn amongst some seamen, this White-water Island, I remembered; but I never met with a man that had seen it, every one having had it from a shipmate last voyage, though a terrible place it had been, by all accounts, without one’s knowing exactly where it was. One craft of some kind had gone to find out a treasure that was buried in it, and she never was heard of more; a man took a fancy to live ashore in it, like Robinson Crusoe, and he went mad, while the reason there were no ‘natives’ was owing to the dreadful nature of it, though at the same time it was as beautiful as a garden. The right name, however, according to Jones, was Incoo. ‘There’s no good in blinding one’s self to it, Mr Collins,’ he went on; ‘that’s the island the men meant, only their chart set me wrong owing to the greater size of it—you had better beat out of this at once, and keep up for the eight-degrees channel there.’

“We were in open sea again, out of sight of land from the mast-head, steering for somewhere about north-north-east, with a very light breeze from nearly the monsoon quarter, and

sometimes a flying squall, sometimes no more than a black pour of rain, that left it hotter than before. The clear, deep blue of the Indian Ocean got to a sickly heavy sort of dead colour towards noon, like the bottoms of old bottles, and still we were standing on without signs of land, when, almost all at once, I noticed the water in the shadow of the schooner had a brown, coffee-like tint I had never exactly seen hitherto; indeed, by the afternoon, it was the same hue to the very horizon, with a clean seaboard on all sides. I had the deep-sea lead-line hove at length, and found no soundings with a hundred and fifty fathoms; there was neither land nor river, I knew, for hundreds and hundreds of miles to the coast of Arabia; as for current, no trial I could think of showed any; and there were now and then patches of small glittering sea-jellies and sea-lice to be seen amongst a stalk or two of weed on the soft heave of the water, going the way of the breeze. A dozen or so of Portuguese men-of-war, as they call them, held across our bows one time; little pink blubbers, with their long, shining roots seen hanging down in the clear of the surface, and their little blue gauze sails with the light through them, ribbed like leaves of trees, as they kept before the wind. Westwood and I both fancied we could feel a queer sulphury smell as we leant over the side, when a surge came along the bends. Not a single fish was to be seen about us, either, except the long big black-fish that rose one after the other at a distance, as the wind got lighter. One while you heard them groaning and gasping in the half-calm, as if it were the breathing of the sea far and wide every time it swelled; another, one saw them in a cluster of black points against the bright sky-line, like so many different shaped rocks with the foam round them, or a lot of long-boats floating bottom up, with their back-horns for humps on the keel. As for Jones, he looked graver and graver, till all of a sudden we saw him go below; but after a little he came up with an almanack in his hand, and his finger fixed where the time of the next new moon was given, as I found when I took it from him, for he seemed not inclined to speak. 'Why, what has that to do with the thing?' I said. 'We are heading fair for the Minicoy cluster, I think.' 'Yes, sir,' said he; 'if one needed anything to prove that, he has only to look at the sea; at this season, I *knew* how it would turn out.' 'Well, that's what I

can't understand, Mr Jones,' said I; 'the water seems as deep as St Paul's Cathedral thrice over!'

" 'Do you not know then, sir, why that island is called—what it is?' was the answer. 'But, wait—wait—till *night!*' And with that Jones turned round to the bulwarks, leaning his arms on the rail. In the meantime Jacobs and some of the men had drawn a bucket of water, which we noticed them tasting. A pannikin full of it was handed along to the quarterdeck, and the taste struck you at once, owing to the want of the well-known briny twang of real blue water, and instead of that a smack as it were of iron, though it was as clear as crystal. Everyone had a trial of it but Jones himself; indeed, he never once looked round, till it had occurred to me to pour the tin of water into a glass, and hold it with my hand over it inside the shade of the binnacle, when I thought I made out little specks and sparks shooting and twisting about in it, as if the water had a motion of itself; then it seemed to sink to the bottom, and all was quiet. Just then I looked up and caught Jones's scared, restless sort of glance, as if he were uneasy. There was a strange life in that man's brain, I felt, that none could see into; but owing as it plainly was to something far away from the present matter, I knew it was best to let him alone. In fact, his doing as he did showed well enough he meant fair by ourselves. Nothing on earth ever gave me more the notion of a wreck in a man than the kind of gaze out of Jones's two eyes when he'd turn to the light and look at you, half-keen, half-shrinking, like a man that both felt himself above you, and yet, somehow or other, you'd got him under you.

"I'm blessed if I didn't trust him more because he had been too desperate a character in his deeds beforehand to turn his mind to little ones now, than for anything good in him; being one of those fellows that work their way from one port to another in ships' forecastles, and get drunk ashore, though, all the time, you'd say there wasn't one aboard with them, from the skipper to the chaplain, knew as much or had flown as high some time. Some day at sea the hands are piped round the grating, hats off, and the prayer-book rigged—down goes 'Jack Jones' with a splash and a bubble to his namesake, old 'Davy,' and you hear no more of him!

"Well, just after sundown, as the dusk came on, Westwood

and I left the deck to go down to supper with the planter, the midshipman being in charge. There was nothing in sight, sail or land; indeed, the queer dark-brown tint of the horizon showed strongly against the sky, as if it had been the mahogany of the capstan-head inside its brass rim; the night was cloudy, with a light breeze, and though the stars came out, I expected it to get pretty dark. As I went down the companion, I heard nothing but the light wash of the water from her bows, and the look-out stepping slowly about betwixt her knight-heads on the forecastle; while it struck me the smooth face of the sea seemed to show wonderfully distinct into the dusk, the completer it got, as if a sort of light rose up from off it. Down below we felt her stealing pleasantly through all, and Tom and I sat for I didn't know how long, trying to settle our differences on the main point—about the *Seringapatam*, of course, and which way she was likely to be gone. Tom plumed himself mightily on his common-sense view of a thing, and having by this time got back a good deal of his cheerfulness, he and Mr Rollock almost laughed me over to his line of thinking.

“We then agreed that the ship must be at present edging up on one side or other of the Maldives, but both of them thought the less we had to say to her the better. ‘I say, though,’ exclaimed the planter, whose face was turned the opposite way to ours, ‘I’d no idea it was moonlight!’ ‘Moonlight! there’s no moon till morning,’ I said. ‘Look into the stern-cabin there, then!’ said Rollock; and I turned round, seeing into the door of the after-cabin, where, to my no small surprise, there was a bright white glare through the little square stern-light, gleaming on the rim of the sill, and seemingly off both the air and the water beyond. Quite confounded, as well as wondering what Snelling could be about, I hurried up the companion, the planter and Westwood hard at my heels.

“For so long as I had kept at sea, and a good many different latitudes I had been into, yet I must say I never in my life before saw such a strange sight as broke on us the instant we put our heads out of the booby-hatch, fresh from the lamp-light in the cabin. Indeed, I can’t but own to my first feeling being fright; for what it was I couldn’t understand, unless we were got into a quarter of the world where

things weren't natural. There were a few stray clouds in the sky, scattered away ahead, and clearing eastward to settle along before the breeze; all aloft of us, high over the sharp dark edge of the sails and gaffs, the air seemed to open away out, pale and glimmering like a reflection in the ice; all round you caught a glimpse of the stars weakening and weakening toward the horizon.

"But the water itself—that was the sight that bewildered one! On every side the whole sea lay spread out smooth, and as white as snow—you couldn't fancy how wide it might stretch away astern on our lee-beam, for not a mark of horizon was to be seen, save on the north-west, where you made it out, owing to the sky there being actually darker than the sea—but all the time the wide face of it was of a dead ghastly paleness, washing with a swell like milk to our black counter as we forged ahead. It wasn't that it shone in the least like blue water at night in the ordinary tropics—by Jove! that would have been a comfort—but you'd have thought there was a winding-sheet laid over all, or we were standing across a level country covered with snow—only when I stood up, and watched the bows, there was a faint hissing sparkle to be seen in the ripple's edge that first brought me to myself. The Lascars had woke up where they lay about the caboose, and were cowering together for sheer terror; the men standing, each one in his place, and looking; while Jones, who had relieved the midshipman, leant by himself with his head on the capstan, as if to keep out the sight of it all; the schooner's whole dusky length, in fact, with every black figure on her decks, and her shape up to the lightest stick or rope of her aloft, appearing strange enough, in the midst of the broad white glare, to daunt anyone that wasn't acquainted with the thing. 'Mr Jones,' said I quickly, on going up to him, 'what the devil is this?' I'll be hanged if I didn't begin to believe in witchcraft or something. 'Where are we getting to?' 'Nothing, nothing, sir,' said he, lifting his head; 'tis natural enough; only the milk-sea, as they call it—the white-water, sir, that comes down twice a year hereabouts from God knows where—you only see it so at—at *night*!'

"'Oh, then, according to that,' I said, 'we shan't be long of sighting your island, I suppose?' 'No,' said he; 'if the breeze freshens at all, keeping our present course, the mast-

head ought to hail it in two or three hours ; but, God knows, Lieutenant Collins, natural though the sight is, there's something a man can't get rid of, especially if——' He stood up, walked to the side, and kept facing the whole breadth of the awful-looking sea, as it were, till it seemed to blind him. 'I tell you what, sir,' said he, slowly, 'if that water had any use, a priest would say 'twas sent to wash that same island clean of what's been done on it ; but it couldn't, Mr Collins, it couldn't till the day of judgment !' He leant over, till his dark face and his shoulders, to my notion, made the milk-white surge that stole up to the schooner's bends take a whiter look. 'If that water could wash *me* now,' muttered he, 'ay, if it could only take the soul out of me, but I'd go down, down this moment to the bottom !' With that he gave a sudden move that made me catch him by the arm. 'No, no, Mr Collins,' said he, turning round ; 'the truth is, I mean to go through with it ; I'll let it carry me where I am bound for ! Wasn't I born without asking my leave, and I'll kick the bucket the same way, if it was on a blasted dunghill !' 'Come, come, Mr Jones,' said I, in a soothing sort of a way, 'go below for a little, and sleep ; when we hail the land I'll have you called.' 'I'd rather not, sir,' said Jones, quietly ; 'the truth is, it strikes me there's something strange in my happening to be aboard here, at this particular season, too ; and see that same island, *now*, I must ! It's fate, Lieutenant Collins,' added he ; 'and I must say, I think it's the more likely something may turn out there. Either you'll see that ship, or the men, or else *I'll* be there myself, in some way or other !'

"Now there was something in all this that began at moments quite to bewilder one, the more excited the state was it put you in. There was nothing for it but to push on, and see what might come of it. Indeed, the weather favoured us better on our present course than on any other ; and I felt, if I didn't keep active, I should go distracted. 'Twas almost as if what Jones said had a truth in it, and a sort of a power beyond one were drawing the schooner the way she steered ; while at the same time there was every little while somewhat new in the extraordinary looks of things to hold you anxious. Even a flying touch of a squall we had about midnight didn't the least do away with the

whiteness of the water all around; on the contrary, as the dark cloud crept down upon us, widening on both sides like smoke, the face of the sea seemed to whiten and whiten, casting up a ghastly gleam across the cloud, with its ripples frothing and creaming; till, not knowing *how* things might go hereabouts, you almost expected the first rush of the wind to send it all in a flame to our mastheads.

"Then up she rose on a surge like a snowdrift, and off we drove heeling over to it, gaffs lowered and canvas down, everything lost sight of, save the white sea heaving up against the mist; while the clear-coloured splash of it through our weather bulwarks showed it was water sure enough. The squall went off to leeward, however, the rain hissing like ink into the swell it left, and spotting it all over till the last drops seemed to sink in millions of separate sparkles as far as you could see. The schooner rose from one heave to another to an even keel on the smooth length of it, hoisting her spanking gaffs, hauling aft the sheets, and slipping ahead once more to a breeze fed by the rain. As the sky cleared, the dead white glare the water sent up into it was such you didn't know the one from the other toward the horizon; and in the midst there was only the smooth faint service, brushing whiter with the breeze, as if it was nothing else kept it from going out of sight; with a few streaky clouds turning themselves out like wool in a confused rift of the air aloft; the schooner walking in it without ever a glimpse of a shadow on one side or another; while, as for seeing a sail on the horizon, you might as well have looked for a shred of paper. It wasn't light, neither nor was it haze; nothing but a dead colour off the very sea's face—for the schooner rose and plunged without letting you see a hair's-breath of her draught below the water-line. Every man rubbed his eyes, as if it were all some kind of a dream, and none the less when suddenly we were right upon a long patch of black stripes winding away through the white, like so many sea-serpents come up to breathe, with both ends of them lost in the faintness. Nobody stirred, or said, 'Look-out'; stripe after stripe she went slipping through them as if they'd been ghosts, without a word or an extra turn of the wheel. I daresay, if we had commenced to rise in the air, every man would have held on like grim death, but he wouldn't have wondered much; 'twas

just, 'whatever might happen to please them as had the managing of it,' which was Jacobs' observation when we talked of it after.

"Mr Snelling was the only one that ventured to pass a joke; when Jones, who I thought was out of hearing, looked at the reefer with such a fierce glance, and so scornful at the same time, that I couldn't help connecting what happened the very next moment with it—for without the slightest warning, both of us were flung to leeward, and Snelling pitched into the scuppers, as a huge rolling ridge of the white water came down upon our beam; while the schooner broached-to in the wind, floundering on the swell with her sails aback. Had the breeze been stronger, I think it would have fairly swamped us with the sternway she had; and heave after heave swelled, glaring and weltering out of the pale blind sky, till our decks swam with light in the dusk under the bulwarks, and about the dark mouths of the hatchways. Just as suddenly the rollers seemed to sink in the smooth of the sea, and at last we payed off with the breeze as before, at the cost of a good fright and a famous ducking. Two or three times in the course of the middle watch did this happen, except that we were taken less by surprise, and had the hatches closed, with every rope ready to let go; the breeze strengthening all the time, and the same sort of look continuing all round and aloft.*

* The description of this peculiar phenomenon of the Indian Ocean, as given by Captain Collins, surprised us as much as the reality seems to have done him. However, on consulting a seafaring old gentleman of much experience in all parts of the world, we are informed that such an appearance is periodically to be met with for some distance between the Laccadive and Maldive Islands, as he had reason to know. The old Dutch Captain Stavorinus also furnishes an account substantially similar, having particularly attended to the cause of it in his voyage to the East Indies. It reaches also to some of the south-eastern islands at a great distance from India, near Java—or at all events appears there. In the Atlantic, Humboldt says there is a part of the sea always milky, although very deep, in about 57 degrees W. longitude, and the parallel of the island of Dominica. Of the same nature, probably, are the immense olive-green spaces and stripes seen in blue water by Captain Scoresby and others, toward the ice of the north polar regions. The pale sea alluded to is supposed either to move from the shores of Arabia Felix, and the gulfs in that coast, or, by some to arise, from sulphureous marine exhalations—appearing to rot the bottoms of vessels, and to frighten the fish. Both at the Laccadives and near Java it

"About four o'clock or so, the appearance of the sky near where the horizon ought to be, right ahead, struck Westwood and me as stranger than ever; owing to a long lump of shadow, as it were, lying northward like the shape of a bow or the round back of a fish miles long, though it softened off at one end into the hollow of the air, and the gleam of the white water broke past the other like the streaks of the northern lights on a frosty night toward the Pole, save for the thin, shadowy tint of it, and the stars shining plainly through. I'd have fancied it was high land; when suddenly the half-moon was seen to ooze like a yellow spot out of the shapeless sort of steam to eastward, like a thing nobody knew, shedding a faint brown glimmer far below where you hadn't seen there was water at all.

"The bank of shadow softened away towards her, till in little more than five minutes the dark rippling line of the sea was made out, drawn across the dusk as if it had been the wide mouth of a frith in the polar ice, opening far on our weather-bow. A soft blue shimmering tint stole out on it by contrast, leaving the milk-white glare still spread everywhere else, astern, ahead, and on our lee-beam, into the sightless sky: 'twas the old blue water we caught sight of once more, with the natural night and the stars hanging over it; and the look-out aloft reported blue water stretching wide off to the nor'ard. There was one full hurrah from the seamen in the bows, and they ran of themselves naturally enough to the ropes, standing by to haul the schooner on a wind—to head up for the old salt sea, no doubt.

"'Lieutenant Collins,' said Jones in a low voice, 'do you mean to steer for that island, sir?' 'Yes,' I said, 'certainly, Mr Jones—I shall see this matter out, whatever the upshot may be!' 'Then keep on, sir,' said he firmly, 'keep in the white water—'tis your only plan to near it safely, sir!' This I didn't well understand; but, by Jove! there was so much out of the common way hereabouts, that I had made up my mind to follow his advice. Another hail from aloft, at length—'Something black on our lee-bows, sir—right in the eye of

is seen twice a year, often with a heavy rolling of the sea and bad weather. The first time, at the new moon in June, it is called by the Dutch the "little white-water"; again, at the new moon in August, the great "white-water"; by English seamen, generally, the milk-sea, or the "blink."

the white it is, sir!’ We were now running fast down in the direction where there was least possibility of seeing ahead at all, although, in fact, the little moonshine we had, evidently began to make this puzzling hue of the surface less distinct—turning it of a queer ashy drab, more and more like the brown we noticed by daytime; while the light seemed as it were to scoop out the hollow of the sky aloft, when a dark spot or two could be observed from the deck, dotting the milky space over one bow—you couldn’t say whether in the air or the water, as they hung blackening and growing together before us through below the foot of the jib.

“Larger and larger it loomed as we stood before the breeze, till there was no doubt we had the bulk of a small low island not far to windward of us, a couple of points or thereabouts on our larboard bow when she fell off a little—lying with the ragged outline of it rising to a top near one end, its shape stretched black and distinct in the midst of the pale sea; while the white water was to be seen taking close along the edge of the island, showing every rock and point of it in the shadow from the moon, till it seemed to turn away all of a sudden like a current into the broad, dreamy glimmer that still lay south-eastward. On the other side of the island you saw the dark sea-ripples flickering to the faint moonlight, and some two or three more patches of flat land just tipping the horizon, with the thin cocoa-nut trees on them like reeds against the stars and the dusk; while the one nearest us was sufficiently marked out to have saved me the trouble even of the look I gave Jones, which he answered by another. ‘You have seven or eight fathoms water here, sir,’ added he; ‘and as soon as she rounds the point yonder, we can shoal it by degrees to any anchorage you like, as long as we keep in the white water—but we must hold to *it*!’ It was accordingly found so with the lead, and ere long, having kept past the point, the same milky hue could be noticed as it were jaggling off through the darker water, and winding away hither and thither all round the other side, till you lost it.

“However, here we brailed up and hauled down everything, letting go an anchor little more than half-a-mile from a small sloping beach, where the strange water actually surged up through the shadow of the land in one glittering sheet, like new-fallen snow, while the back-wash seethed down into it all

along the edge in perfect fire. Nothing stirred on it, apparently; not a sound came from it, save the low wash of the surf on that lonely bare beach; and you only made out that part of the island was covered with trees, with the ground rising to a flat-topped hummock toward one end. So being pretty wearied by this time, impatient though I was for a clearer view of matters, most of us turned in, leaving the deck to a strong anchor-watch, in charge of Jones—especially as it was towards morning, and the breeze blowing fresh over the island through our ropes. But if ever a man walked the deck overhead in a fashion to keep you awake, it was Jones that morning: faster and faster he went, till you'd have thought he ran; then there was a stop, when you felt him *thinking*, and off he posted again. No wonder, by George! I had ugly dreams!

CHAPTER XXIX

“I COULD scarce believe it wasn't a dream still, when, having been called half-an-hour after daybreak, I first saw the change in the appearance of things all about us. The horizon lay round as clear as heart could wish—not a speck in sight save the little dingy islets at a distance; the broad blue ocean sparkling far away on one side, and the water to windward, in the direction we had come, showing the same brownish tint we had seen the day before, while it took the island before us in its bight, and turned off eastward with the breeze till it spread against the open sky. The top of the land was high enough to shut out the sea-line, and being low water at the time, it was plain enough now why Jones wished to keep the white streaks over-night; for, where the dingy-coloured ripples melted on the other side towards the blue, you could see by the spots of foam, and the greenish breaks here and there in the surface, that all that coast of the island was one network of shoals and reefs, stretching out you didn't know how wide. White-water Island, in fact, was merely the head of them—the milky stream that had so startled us just washing round the deep end of it, and edging fair along the side of the reefs, with a few creeks sent in amongst them, as it were, like feelers, ere

it flowed the other way: we couldn't otherwise have got so near as we were. But the island itself was the sight to fasten you, as the lovely green of it shone out in the morning sun, covering the most part of it close over, and tipping up beyond the bare break where it was steepest, with a clump of tall cocoas shooting every here and there out of the thick bush; indeed, there was apparently a sort of split lengthways through the midst, where, upon only walking to the schooner's bow, one could see the bright greenwood sinking down to a hollow out of sight, under the clear gush of the breeze off a dark blue patch of the sea that hung beyond it like a wedge.

"As the tide made over the long reefs, till the last line of surf on them vanished, it went up the little sandy cove opposite us with a splash on the beach that you could hear; the place was just what a sailor may have had a notion of all his life, without exactly seeing it till then; and though as yet one had but a rough guess of its size, why, it couldn't be less than a couple of miles from end to end, with more than that breadth, perhaps, at the low side toward the reefs. Not a soul amongst the man-o'-war's men, I daresay, as they pressed together in the schooner's bows to see into it, but would have taken his traps that moment, if I'd told him, and gone ashore on the chance of passing his days there; so it wasn't hard to conceive, from the state it seemed to put their rough sun-burnt faces in, honest as they looked, how a similar fancy would work with Master Harry Foster, even if it tried his virtue a little.

"I had no more doubt in my mind, by this time, of its being the fellow's intended 'hermitage,' than I had of its being the same White-water Island I had heard of myself, or the spot which Jones seemed to know so well; 'twas likely the foremast-man had got an inkling of it somewhat in the way I did; and, lying, as it happened to do, between no less than three channels which the Indiaman might take, after dodging us in this fashion round the long cluster of the Maldives, she couldn't make north-westward again for the open sea without setting Foster and his mates pretty well upon their trip.

"Indeed, if she were to eastward of the chain at present, as I was greatly inclined to believe, the course of the breeze made it impossible for her to do otherwise; but there was one thing always kept lurking about my mind, like a cover to

something far worse that I didn't venture to dwell upon—namely, that Captain Finch might get wind of their purpose, and drive them on another tack by knocking it on the head, either at the time or beforehand, without the courage to settle *them*. Nothing in the world would have pleased me better than to pounce upon ugly Harry at his first breakfast ashore here; but the bare horizon, and the quiet look of the island since ever we hove in sight of it, showed this wasn't to be. At any rate, however, I was bent on seeing how the land lay, and what sort of a place it was; so, accordingly, as soon as the hands had got breakfast, Westwood and I at once pulled ashore, with a boat's-crew well armed, to overhaul it. We found the sandy beach covered, for a good way up, with a frothy slime that no doubt came from the water on that side, with ever so many different kinds of blubber, sea-jelly, starfish, and shell, while the rocky edge round to windward was hung with weed that made the blocks below it seem to rise out of every surge, like green-headed, white-bearded mermen bathing. Glad enough we were to get out of the queer sulphury smell all this stuff gave out in the heat, letting the men take every one his own way into the bushes, which they enjoyed like so many schoolboys, and making ourselves right for the highest point. Here we saw over, through the cocoanut trees and wild trailing-plants below, down upon a broad bushy level towards the reefs.

"It was far the widest way of the island; indeed making it apparently several miles to go round to the different points; and as the men were to hold right to windward, and meet again after beating the entire ground, Westwood and I struck fair through amongst the tangle of wood, to see the flat below.

"We roused out a good many small birds and paraquets, and several goats could be noticed looking at us off the grassy bits of crag above the trees, though they didn't seem to know what we were. As for most of the wood, it was mainly such bushes and brush as thrive without water, with a bright green flush of grass and plants after the rain at the monsoon, the prickly pear creeping over the sandy parts, till we came on a track where some spring or other apparently oozed down from the height, soaking in little rank spots amongst the ground leaves, with here and there a small rusty plash

about the grass-blades, as if there were tar or iron in it. Here there were taller trees of different kinds on both sides, dwindling off into the lower bush, while, to my surprise, some of them were such as you'd never have expected to meet with on an island of the size, so far off the land—bananas, mangoes, a shaddock or two, and a few more, common enough in India; though here they must evidently have been planted, the cocoas being the only sort natural to the place, and of them there were plenty below. Suddenly it led down into a shady hollow, out of sight of the sea altogether, where we came on what seemed to have been a perfect garden some time or other; there were two or three large broad-leaved shaddock-trees, and one or two others, with a heap of rubbish in the midst of the wild Indian corn and long grass, some broken bamboo-stakes standing, besides a piece of plank scattered here and there about the bushes.

“Right under the shade of the trees was a hole like the mouth of a draw-well, more than brimful at the time with the water from the spring, for, owing to the late rains, it made a pool close by the side, and went trickling away down amongst the brushwood. Every twig and leaf grew straight up or out, save in a narrow track toward the rising ground—no doubt made by the goats, as we noticed the prints of their hoofs on the wet mud. 'Twas evident no human being had been there for heaven knew how long, since, by the care that had been taken with the place, it was probably the only spring in the island—perhaps for leagues and leagues round indeed. Trees, branches, green grass, and all—they had such a still, moveless air under the heat and light, in the lee of the high ground, with just a blue spot or two of the sea seen high up through the sharp shaddock-leaves, and the cool-looking splash of water below them, that Westwood and I sat down to wait till we heard the men. Still, there was a terribly distinct, particular cast about the whole spot, which, taken together with the ruin and confusion, as well as the notion of Foster and his shipmates actually plotting to come there, gave one almost an idea of the whole story beforehand, dim as that was—the longer you looked the more horrid it seemed. Neither natives nor a single man could have brought the different trees to the island, or contrived a tank-well of the kind, seeing it was apparently deep enough to supply a ship's casks, while at the

same time I couldn't help thinking someone had lived there since it was made, or perhaps much used.

"By the space taken up with the hut that had been there, and the little change in the wild state of things, most likely it was by himself he had been, and for no short time. It looked, however, as if he had been carried off in the end, otherwise his bones would have been hereabouts; probably savages, as Westwood and I concluded from the scatter they had made of his premises. For my own part, I wondered whether Jones mightn't have been the man, in which case most of that disturbed mind he showed lately might come of remembering the dreary desolate feeling one must have, living long on a desert island. No doubt they had 'marooned' him for something or other, such as not being a bloody enough captain; and I could as easily fancy one having a spice of madness in him, after years ashore here, as in Captain Wallis after a French prison. Still it startled one to see one's face in the black of the well; and we couldn't make up our minds to drink out of it. Even the pool at its side had a queer taste, I thought—but that may have been all a notion. All at once, by the edge of this same pool, Westwood pointed out two or three marks that surprised us both, being quite different from what the goats could have made; and on observing closer, they were made out to be more like the paws of a wild beast stamped in the mud. 'By Jove!' I said, 'no wolves on the island, surely!' 'All of them seem to stick to the pool in preference to the well, at any rate,' said Tom; 'they appear to have the same crotchet with ourselves, Ned!' 'Strange!' said I, 'what the devil can it be?'

"Westwood eyed the prints over and over. 'What do you think of—a *dog*?' he asked. 'Good heavens!' exclaimed I, looking down—'yes!' and there we sat gazing at the thing, and musing over it, with somehow or other a curious creeping of the blood, for my part, that I can't describe the reason of. At last we heard the men hallooing to each other on the level beneath, when we hurried down, and coasted round till we came upon the boat again, where the coxswain was amusing himself gathering shells for home—and we pulled back to the schooner.

"My first resolve after this was to keep before the breeze again, try to get sight of the ship, and tell Finch out and out,

as I ought to have done at once, what was afoot amongst his crew ; or else to let Sir Charles Hyde know of it, and make him a bold offer of a passage to Calcutta. However, I soon saw this wouldn't do ; and a regular puzzle I found myself in, betwixt inclining to stick to the island and catch Foster if he came, and wishing to know how the Indiaman stood on her course if he didn't. Jones must have read my thoughts as I leant upon the capstan, looking from White-water Island to the horizon and back again ; for he stepped aft, and said in a low voice, 'Lieutenant Collins, there's one thing I didn't tell you about that island before, because, as I said, I wasn't at first sure it was the one the men meant ; it may help to decide you, sir,' said he gravely. 'Ah?' I said. 'In that island,' he went on, his ordinarily dark face as pale as death, 'there is enough gold, at this moment, to buy half an English county—ay, and better than gold, seeing that only one man knows the spot where it is, and *he* would rather sail round the world without a shirt to his back than touch one filing of the—hell's dross !'

"I looked at Jones in perfect amaze as he added, 'You may fancy now, Mr Collins, whether if a man of the kind happened to get wind of this, he would not stir heaven and earth to reach the place? But, rather than that gold should come into living hands,' said he fiercely, 'I would *wait for them* by myself—ay, alone—alone'; and a shudder seemed to run through him again as he gave another glance to the island. For my part, I drew a long breath. What he mentioned had all at once relieved my mind wonderfully ; for if this was Master Foster's cue, as I now saw it must have been the whole voyage over, why, he would be just as sure not to spread the thing widely, as he would be to get here some time, if he could. On second thoughts, it wasn't so plain how the rest of the crew might work with it, on the least inkling ; but inclined as I naturally was to look upon the best side of the matter, you needn't wonder at my making up my mind as I did. The short and the long of it was that, in an hour more, Jones and myself, with Jacobs and four other good hands—and, somewhat to my annoyance, Mr Rollock, who persisted in coming—were pulling back for the island ; while the schooner, under care of Westwood and Snelling, was hauled on a wind to stand up across the Nine Degrees Channel, which the

Indiaman would no doubt take as the safest course for Western India, if all went well, and supposing I had reckoned correctly why we missed her so long. In that case, three or four days at most couldn't fail to bring her up; and on first sighting her at the horizon, they could easily enough strip the schooner to her sticks, keeping her stern on so as to let the ship pass without noticing the loom of so small a craft; whereas if they didn't see her at all, in that time, they were to bear up before the wind again for the island. Of all things, and every circumstance being considered, I agreed with Westwood it was best not to come across her again, if we could help it.

"For our own part, in the boat, we were fully provisioned and armed for all the time we could need, not to speak of what the island itself afforded; and after watching the schooner stand heeling off to sea, round the deep end of it, we cruised close along, not for the beach this time, but seeking for a cove in the rocks where the boat could be hauled up out of sight, and safe from the surf at high water. This we weren't very long of finding behind some blocks that broke the force of the surge, where the wild green trailers from above crept almost down to the seaweed; and after helping them a little to hide her perfectly, the whole of us scrambled ashore. The first thing was to post a look-out on the highest point, the sharp little peak next to the reef-side, overlooking the spring and the level ground between; on the other side of the long green valley, full of bush in the midst, was the flat-topped rise towards the brown water, from which I and the planter watched the schooner softening for an hour or two, till she reached the blue sea-gleam, and lessened to a speck. By that time, the men had pitched a little canvas tent on the slope opposite to us, over the hollow—Jones evidently being anxious to keep clear of the spot, which somebody else had picked out beforehand; in fact the highest ground was betwixt us and it; and on coming down through the thicket to our quarters, after a stroll in which Rollock shot a couple of rose-coloured parquets, declaring them to be splendid eating, we found Jones had had to send over the other way for water.

CHAPTER XXX

"I WOKE up in the tent perhaps an hour before midnight, as I judged on looking through the opening at the stars that shone in the dark sky through the north-east end of the valley above the sea. At the other end, being higher, you just saw the scattered heads of the bushes against a pale floating glimmer of air, with a pale streak of horizon. Behind us was the height where we had the look-out, and in front the flat top of the crag drawn somehow or other as distinct as possible upon the faint starlight in that quarter, roughening away down on both sides into the brushwood and dwarf cocoa-nut trees. With the stillness of the place all round, the bare sight of that particular point gave me a dreamy, desolate, ghastly sort of feeling, beyond aught I ever saw in my life before: it was choking hot and heavy inside, and seemingly throughout the hollow, though a good deal of dew began to fall, glistening on the dark-green bushes nearest us, and standing in drops on the fern-like cocoa-leaves which Jacobs and the other men had roofed themselves with. They were sound asleep; and the glimpse of the soles of their shoes and their knees, sticking out of the shadow you saw their rough faces in, with the sight of their cutlass-hilts, served to give one a still wilder notion of the place. One felt scarce sure of being able to wake them, in case of anything turning up; and, at any rate, a dread came over you of its being possibly somewhat unnatural enough to make the thing useless.

"On the other hand, the planter kept up such a confounded snoring inside the canvas close by me, that although there was no doubt of his being alive, the sound of it put stranger thoughts into your head. Sometimes his breath would be jogging on like that of a tolerably ordinary mortal, then get by degrees perfectly quiet; and then all of a sudden go rising and rising, faster and faster, as if some terrible dream had hold of him, or there was some devilish monster hard in chase of his soul, till out it broke into a fearful snort that made your very heart jump—whereupon he'd lie as if he were finished, then go through the whole story again. I can't tell you how that cursed noise troubled me; 'twas no use shoving and speaking to him, and all the time the old boy was evidently

quite comfortable, by something he said at last about 'indigo being up.' The best I could do was to get out and leave him to himself; in fact, where Jones had gone at the time I didn't know, till suddenly I caught sight of his dark figure standing on the rise at the back of our post, and went up to him. Jones was certainly a strange mixture, for here had he been all round the low side of the island by himself, yet I found him leaning bareheaded on the barrel of his musket, listening like a deer. He assured me solemnly he thought he had heard voices for the last hour on the other side, where he hadn't been, and asked me if I would go with him to see. Then down came our look-out from the peak, rolling through the bushes like a sea-crow, to report his not having seen anything, and to say they'd forgot to relieve him aloft; so rousing up Jacobs, I sent them both back together, while Jones and I held the opposite way for the other height.

"The moment we had got to it, *there* was the same faint blotted-out horizon as we had had all astern of us the night before, the same strange unnatural paleness cast off the face of the sea, making it look black by contrast to north-eastward and east, against the blue shadow with the bright stars in it, where the sea rippled as usual; while the keenest glare in the middle seemed to stream right to the breast of the island, like the reflection of daylight down a long break in the ice—only it was dead and ghastly to behold. The white water washed round under the black edge of the rocks before us, to the bare sloping beach, where it came up fairly like a wide plash of milk, glimmering and sparkling back amongst the little sea-creatures you fancied you saw moving and crawling out or in: till it ran along by where the reefs were, and turned off to the dim sky again. Everything else was still, and Jones drew a breath like one relieved: 'Nothing after all, I think, sir!' said he. But to my mind there was something a long sight more awful in the look of that unaccountable white water bearing down like snow upon the island, as it were, with the wrinkles and eddies to be seen faintly in it here and there back toward the glaring breadth of it, and the floating streaks in the sky above; especially when he told me he thought it was owing to millions upon millions of living things in it, that made the same show there at two different seasons

in the year, for a week or so at a time—the appearance of it getting less distinct every night.

“However, I had begun to grow uneasy again about the Indiaman, and the schooner too, as well as doubtful of the fellows coming to the island at all; on the contrary, as I said to Jones, if they saw the schooner, and Westwood didn’t manage as I told him, why both she, the ship, and ourselves might possibly get the finishing-stroke altogether. ‘The more I think of it,’ said I, ‘the more foolish it seems to be here instead of aboard!’ ‘Why it is, Mr Collins, I don’t know,’ replied Jones, ‘yet I feel as sure these men will land here as if I heard them in the woods; and if I wasn’t aware how one crime breeds another, for my part I shouldn’t be here at present, sir. Many a night afloat has the thought of this place weighed on me, lest there was something new doing in it; but what’s buried here I’m resolved no man shall stir up, if I can help it, sir!’ A little after, as we got up and went down to the beach, all of a sudden—like a thing he couldn’t avoid—Jones began to give me some snatches of what had happened here some years before, which, according to him, he had got from a shipmate of his that died; and I must say it made the blood creep in me to listen to it.

“‘At the beginning of the war,’ he said, ‘the island had been a nest of regular pirates, who had taken pains to make it, from a mere muddy head of a reef with some cocoas upon it, probably into a resort on occasions—especially as even the wild Maldive natives to southward had somehow a dislike to it. The whole gang being taken by some cruiser or other at sea, however, too far off to leave any clue to their harbourage hereabouts, they were all hanged, and the place lost sight of, till, a good many years after, a country Arab craft, bound for Dacca up the Ganges, was driven in a gale upon the reefs some way off, without seeing the island at all till the sea went down, and she was going to pieces.

“‘There were only two Europeans aboard, both having turned Mussulmans, and the youngest of them was mate. There was a passenger, a native Indian merchant, and his servants, with, as was believed, his harem below in the after-cabins, for nobody ever had seen them; but the Arab *rais* of the vessel and several more being washed off when she struck, the other Mussulmans took to the only boat they had, and got

ashore, leaving the two Englishmen with the passenger. Next day the two men had contrived a raft of the spars, whereupon the Hindoo at last brought up his three women, veiled from head to foot, and the whole got safe to the island. Here all the Mahometans herded together amongst themselves, forcing the two Englishmen to keep on the other side of the island, as they had no firearms, while the old Hindoo merchant and his native servant got a tent pitched on the highest point for the women, where they were no more seen than before, and a flag hoisted on a stick all the time for a signal to ships—poor simple devil!’ as Jones said with a laugh. ‘Every day he offered the Arab crew more of the gold and jewels he had with him, to make for India and get him brought of, till at last some of the Arabs came round to the mate and his companion, wanting them to take the boat and go instead, otherwise they would kill both of them at once. The two men accordingly had provisions given them, and hoisted sail on the boat before the breeze to eastward; they had almost dropped the island, when all at once the one in the boat’s bows stepped aft to him that had the tiller, and said it struck him the Arabs couldn’t mean well to the Hindoo and his wives, in trying to get clear of others.

“‘All his companion did,’ Jones said, ‘was to ask if he was man enough to go back, face them boldly, and offer to take the passenger and his harem too, when some craft or other might come back for the Arabs, since they weren’t seamen enough to venture first in the boat. “I tell you what,” said the first, “try the two largest breakers of water there!” The water for use next after the open one was tasted, and it was *salt*. “Will you stand by me?” the second man said, after awhile. The other had a dog with him of his own, that had swam ashore from the vessel after the raft he landed upon, and it was sleeping in the boat’s bow at the moment, near him; the dog lifted its head as they spoke, eyed the two, and lay down again with a low sort of growl. “Ay,” answered the other, “to the last I will—as long as you stick by *me*!” They hauled over the sheet, laid the boat sharp on a wind, and as soon as it was dusk began to pull back toward the island, where they got ashore in the dark before morning.’

“Here Jones stopped, turned suddenly round to the glare of the white water plashing upon the beach, and said no more.

‘Why, Jones,’ said I, ‘is that all you’ve to tell? What came of them? For God’s sake, yes—what was the upshot?’ ‘Tis enough to show how one bad thing breeds another, as I said, sir,’ answered he. ‘Probably in the end, though—at any rate I only fancy the rest—’tis a horrible dream to me, for a—a—squall came on when that shipmate of mine got so far, and we had to reef topsails. He went overboard off the yard that very night,’ said Jones wildly.

“‘The man must have been *there*,’ said I, in a pointed way, ‘to give all the particulars—he was the mate himself, Mr Jones!’ He made no answer, but kept gazing out to sea. ‘And how long was this ago?’ I asked. ‘Oh,’ answered he, ‘years enough ago, no doubt, sir, for both of us to be children, if *you* were born, Mr Collins’—and he turned his face to me as ghastly as the water toward the horizon he was looking at before—‘at least I hope to God it was so—the man was a poor creature, sir, bless you, and old, as it seems to me—twice my own age at the time, Lieutenant Collins! At all events, though,’ he went on, rambling in a strange way that made me think he was going out of his mind, ‘he remembered well enough the first time he saw the white water coming down upon the island. He was hunting—*hunting*—through the bushes and up and down, and came up upon the crag.’ ‘Hunting?’ I said. ‘Yes, you didn’t know how it lived, or where it kept, but every night it was on the look-out there. There was no one else, save the girl sleeping over beyond in the hut, and the man almost fancied the water of the sea was coming down to the rocks and the beach, like the Almighty himself, to show He was clear of all that had happened—if he could but have finished that brute, testifying like the very devil, he’d have been happy, he felt! Harkye,’ said he, sinking his voice to a whisper, ‘when he went back at daylight the woman was dying—she had borne a—what was as innocent as she was, poor, sweet, young heathen!’

“And if I hadn’t guessed pretty well before that Jones was the man he’d been speaking of, his glittering eye and his stride from the beach would have shown it; apparently he forgot everything besides at that moment, till you’d have thought his mind gloated on this piece of his history. ‘The woman!’ I couldn’t help saying, ‘what woman? Had the rest left you in the boat, then?’

"Jones looked upon me fiercely, then turned away; when all of a sudden such a long unearthly quaver of a cry came down through the stillness, from somewhere aloft in the island, that at first I didn't know what to think, unless one of our look-out men had met with an accident, and tumbled down. 'Twas so dark where they were, however, there was no seeing them. Without looking for himself, Jones faced me, shivering all over. 'What is that, Mr Collins?' whispered he, catching my arm with a clutch like death; 'is there anything yonder—behind—behind—sir?' On the flat head of the crag north-westward, black against the pale glimmer over the very spot where we had stood half-an-hour before, to my utter horror, there was some creature or other sitting as if it looked toward the sea; and just then another wild, quivering, eddying sound came evidently enough from it, like a thing that would never end. It wasn't a human voice, that! my brain spun with it, as I glanced to Jones. 'Good heavens!' I said, '*what?* But, by Jove! now I think of it; yes—'tis the howl of a *dog*—nothing else!' 'Eight—ten years!' said Jones, hoarsely, 'without food, too, and enough in that well to have poisoned whole gangs of men for twenty years—*can* it be an earthly being, sir?' The stare he gave me at the moment was more frightful than aught else, but I mentioned what Westwood and I had observed the day before.

"Before I well knew what he meant, Jones was stealing swiftly up the rising ground to the shoulder of it. I saw him get suddenly on a level with the creature, his musket aiming for it—there was a flash and a shot that left the height as bare as before—and next minute, with a short whimpering howl, the animal flew down the hill, while I heard Jones crashing through the bushes after it, till he was lost in the dark. Such a terrible notion it gave me of his strange story being true, whereas before I had almost fancied it partly a craze of his, from having lived here alone—that for a moment or two it seemed to my mind we were still in the midst of it. I hurried back to our post, and close upon morning Jones came over and lay down by himself, without a word, haggard and covered with sweat.

"All next day the horizon on every side was clear of a single speck; no signs either of ship or schooner, till I began to wish we were out of it, hoping the *Seringapatam* had, after

all, kept the old course for Bombay, in spite of us. I found Jones had warned the men not to get our water out of the tank ; it being poisoned in a way fit to last for years, as the pirates knew how to do. For our parts, we had to amuse ourselves the best way we could, waiting for the schooner to come down again for us, which was the only thing I looked for now. That night the white appearance of the water to north and windward seemed a good deal gone, save where it hung like a haze in the direction it took off the island : the stars shone out, and in two or three nights more I found from Jones there would be nothing of it, which I hoped I should have to take on his word.

“ At daybreak, however, our look-out could all of a sudden be seen hoisting the signal for a sail in sight, and waving his hat for us to come. No sooner had we hurried up, accordingly, than a sail could be made out in the south-east, hull down ; and the schooner not being likely thereaway, a certain flutter in me at once set it down for the Indiaman at last, on her way far past the island for the open channel. Being broad daylight, too, with a fresh breeze blowing, we saw that Foster and his party, if they carried out their scheme, would have to wait till she was a long way to windward at night-time, in order to get clear off. In fact, I had everyone kept down off the height, lest the ship’s glasses might possibly notice something ; while, at the same time, we hadn’t even a fire kindled to cook our victuals. I was watching her over the brow of the hill, through the telescope, when she evidently stood round on the other tack to get up to windward, which brought her gradually nearer. She was a large ship, under full canvas ; and at last she rose her hull to the white streak below the bulwarks, till I began to think they intended passing the island to eastward to make the channel. I went down for Jones, and asked him how far the reefs actually ran out, when he told me there would probably be signs enough of them in such a strong breeze ; besides, as he reminded me, if she was the Indiaman, it was the captain himself that had a chart of them ; in which, from the particular nature of it—being an old buccaneering chart, as he thought—they would be laid down quite plainly.

“ Indeed, when we both returned to the height, there were lines of surf to be noticed here and there, more than three

miles out; and seeing her by that time so distinctly, a new uneasiness began to enter my head. There were no signals we could make, even if they didn't serve the other way; and, to tell the truth, I didn't much like the idea of being found there. Still, it was terrible to see her getting nearer and nearer, without the power of doing the least thing to warn her off; spreading and heightening before you, till you counted her sails, and saw the light betwixt them, with the breeze always strengthening off that side the island, and of course making it the safer for her to pass it to leeward. The blue surges rose longer to the foam at their crests, till one's eye got confused between them and the spots of surf rippling greenish over the tongues of reef; in fact, it wasn't far off being low-water at the time, and the whole was to be seen better from the height than elsewhere, stretched out like a floor that the breeze was sweeping across, raising a white dust where the blue melted into the light-brown tint of the sea to leeward. The breeze came so fresh that she even hauled down her sky-sails and fore-royal, falling off to go to leeward of the island. At the same moment, I made out with the glass that she was actually the *Seringapatam*, and also that she'd got a leadsman at work in the chains. Five minutes more, and she'd have gone time enough into the distinct brown-coloured swells to stand past the deep end: without help from the glass, I saw the sun sparkle in the spray from her black bows; she made a sliding forge ahead with her whole beam on to us; when, next moment, as if she had taken a sudden yaw and broached-to in the wind, she came fairly end on, showing the three piles of canvas in one. A wild boding of the truth crept on me as I sprang on the peak, waving my arms and stamping like a lunatic, as if they could hear me.

"The next instant she had fallen a little over, her fore-topmast and main-to'gallantmast gone out of their places at the shock, and the heavy blue swells running to her highest side in a perfect heap of foam; while the spray rose in white jets across her weather bulwarks at every burst of them. The Indiaman had struck on a rib of reef, or else a spit of sand, near the very edge of the whole bank: had it been only high-water—as I had reason to believe afterwards—she'd have gone clear over it. As soon as the first horror of the thing was a little past, I looked, without a word, to Jones,

and he to me. 'The fellows have come at last, certainly!' said he, in a serious enough tone. 'Mr Collins,' he added, 'the moment I set foot on ground here, I felt sure something would come out of it!' 'Get the men down at once, sir,' I said, 'and let's pull out to the ship!' 'Why, sir,' answered he, 'the breeze is likely to keep for some time as it is, and if she's completely gone, they'll be able to bring all hands safe ashore. If you take my advice, Mr Collins, you'll hold all fast, and show no signs of our being here at all, in case of having something or other to manage yet that may cost us harder!' It didn't need much thought to see this, in fact; and in place of going down, ten minutes after we were all close amongst the bushes on the slope, watching the wreck. What was at the bottom of all this I didn't know; whether Captain Finch had really got wind of Foster's scheme, and been playing with some hellish notion his heart failed him to carry out, or how it was; but what he was to make of *this* was the question.

"Well, toward afternoon, the wreck seemed pretty much in the same state, though by that time they had evidently given her up, for the boats were beginning to be hoisted out to leeward. We couldn't see what went on there, till one of them suddenly appeared, pulling out for the island, about three miles off; then the large launch after it. There were ladies' dresses to be made out in both, their cloaks and shawls fluttering bright to the breeze as the boats dipped in the short swells; and they were full an hour ere they got out of our sight, near the broad beach, on the level side, where the tide was ebbing fast again, making it a hard matter to pull the distance. Two more boats came off the ship, filled full of casks and other matters, save the crews; the rest of the passengers and men no doubt waiting for the launch and jolly-boat to go back and take them ashore—for, soon after, they both could be seen rounding the point on their way out. On coming within hail of the fresh boats, however, they apparently gave in, since we could see the two of them, to our great surprise, strike round, and make for the beach again with their shipmates, spite of signals from the wreck, and shots even fired after them. The breeze by that time flagged, leaving less of a sea against the ship's hull in the dead water from the other reefs, and she had fallen over again to leeward

—a proof of her sticking fast where she struck, without much fear of parting very soon in such weather; but the sun was going down, and this being the first sign of foul play we had observed, it was plain at all events we should have to look sharp about us. We kept close up the height, bolted our cold junk and biscuit, washing down with a stiff caulker, and looked every man to his tools.

“To my great satisfaction, the planter, who had watched everything seemingly in pure bewilderment, woke up out of it when he knew how matters stood, and handled his double-barrel as cool as a cucumber, putting in two bullets above the small shot he had got for the birds, and ramming down with the air of a man summing up a couple of bills against a rascally debtor. For my own part, I must say I was longer of coming to feel it wasn’t some sort of a dream, owing to Jones’s broken story; till the thought of *who* was to all likelihood on the very island below, with the rest of the ladies, amongst a set of all sorts of foremast-men thrown loose from command—half of them probably ruffians, with some hand in the matter—it came on me like fire at one’s vitals. Meantime we sat there patiently enough for want of knowing what was to do first, or which way we had best keep to avoid bringing matters to a head, worse than they yet were.

CHAPTER XXXI

“THE night came out of the dusk a fine starlight to seaward, beyond the reefs where the Indiaman lay, the high side of the island glooming back against the deep blue glistening sky, till you didn’t see how large it might be; while the white water hung glimmering off to leeward from the rocks. The ship’s crew had kindled a fire on the long strand near the boats, and we heard their noise getting louder and louder above the sound of the sea plashing upon it—evidently through their making free with liquor. Jones, being no doubt well acquainted with every part of the ground, proposed to go over and see how things stood, and where the passengers might be; at the same time, as Mr Rollock was more likely to come conveniently to speech of

them, both for explaining our being here and putting them on their guard, he agreed to go too.

"One or other of them was to hurry back as quickly as possible, while the men and myself waited in readiness for whatever might turn up. Hour after hour passed, however, till I was quite out of patience, not to say uneasy beyond description. All was still, save below toward the water's edge—the seamen's voices at times mixing with the washing hum of the surge on the sand, then rising over it in the chorus of a forecastle song, or a sudden bit of a quarrelsome uproar; notwithstanding which they began apparently to settle down to sleep.

"At last the planter came skirting round the hill through the trees, quite out of breath, to say they had discovered the spot where the ladies had no doubt been taken by their friends, as Captain Finch himself, with one of the ship's officers, and two or three cadets, were walking about on the watch, all of them armed. To judge by this, and the fact of the other gentlemen being still apparently on the wreck, Finch mistrusted his men. However, the planter thought it better not to risk a hasty shot through him by going nearer; and, to tell the truth, I thought it better myself to wait till daylight, when we should see if the rest got ashore; or possibly, as I wished to Heaven were the case, the schooner might heave in sight. 'Where is Mr Jones, though?' asked I; on which I found he had gone over for the first time towards the well for some water, as he told Mr Rollock. Indeed, the passengers were settled near the thick of the wood on this side of the watering-place, none of the Indian's people seeming to know as yet there was such a thing on the island.

"We each of us held our breath, and listened to hear Jones come back. I was just on the point of leading my party that way, when I caught the sound of some one panting, as it were up the ridge from the shore, and next moment saw, to my great surprise, it was the creature Jones had such a horror of—the dog that had run wild on the island, sniffing with his nose to the ground as if he were in chase of something; while the straw hats and tarpaulins of half-a-dozen fellows with ship's muskets and cutlasses followed him over the hill, not thirty paces above us.

"I signed to Jacobs to keep quiet, as they halted together, looking at the dog; and, from what I could catch of their words, they had noticed it ever since sundown, sitting at the foot of the hill watching what went on, till the animal ran toward them as if they were friends, every now and then turning and making for the heights with a bark and a whimper, as it did at present. One of the men was Foster. 'I tell ye what it is,' said he, 'there's some fellow on the island already, mates. If we ketch him, why, we'll have it out of him—then down with it quietly to the shore, and go off in the long-boat, seeing as how this blasted fool of a skipper of ours has spoiled our pleasure!' The dog turned again, wagged his tail, and put his nose to the ground. I thought at first he'd bring them right upon us, when suddenly he broke off with a yelp exactly into the track Jones had taken with Mr Rollock on leaving us. The sailors kept away in his wake, down through the bushes into the thick dusk of the trees; upon which the planter and I started to our feet at once, and held cautiously after them, the five man-o'-war's-men following at our heels, Indian file.

"Jones, however, had either heard the dog, or got an inkling of the thing, and he had taken a long round so as to join us from behind: the Indiaman's men keeping on for a quarter of an hour or so, when they brought up again, seemingly doubtful whether to follow the creature or not; and we dropped like one man into the shadow, till they made sail once more. Soon after, the planter pointed to the trees where the passengers were, and, on a sign from me, the whole of us edged down to the spot, till we were standing within sight of the half-finished fire, where the Judge's kitmagar was sitting asleep, tailor-fashion, with his flat turban sunk to his breast. One of the cadets stood down the slope a little, betwixt that and the beach where the crew were, leaning sleepily on his gun, and nodding, while in the midst was a sort of shed, run up with branches and cocoa-nut leaves, where you could see a glimpse of the different ladies' dresses, young and old, asleep on the ground.

"The starlight fell right down into the opening, and showed the glistening edges of the leaves, with the sea broad out beyond the cocoas at the foot of the rising ground; so bidding Jones look out sharp, I stepped carefully through.

My eye lighted at once on Sir Charles Hyde lying in one nook of the shelter, wrapped up in his pilot-coat—the first time in the old gentleman's life for a good while, I daresay, that he had passed his night on the ground, especially with such a lot of berths taken up beside him. Still, he was sound enough at the time, to judge by his breathing, trifle as it was to the planter's ; and close by him was his daughter, with her cloak drawn half over her head in the shadow—her hair confused about her cheek as it pressed white into the bundle of red bunting she had for a pillow, and one hand keeping the cloak fast at the neck, as if she dreamt of a stiff breeze. The sight went to my heart, and so did the notion of waking her ; but I heard sounds below on the beach, as if the rest of the crew missed their shipmates, probably getting jealous after their booze, and not unlikely to seek them up the island, so the more it struck me there was no time to be lost in coming to an understanding. Accordingly, I stooped down quietly, and touched her on the shoulder.

“ Violet Hyde opened her eyes at once, and looked at me ; but whether it was the starlight showing my uniform, or her fancying it was still the Indiaman in the Atlantic, in place of crying out, why, there was almost a smile on her lips as she saw me from the ground. Next moment, however, she drew her hand across her eyelids, sat up with the help of the other arm, and gazed on me in a bewildered way, naming me at the same time below her breath. ‘ Yes, Miss Hyde ! ’ I said hastily ; and a few words served to give her a notion of the case as well as to advise her to wake up the Judge, with the rest of the ladies, and be ready to move the moment we came back. My first thought was to take Foster's own plan, and secure the long-boat, if we could only get betwixt the Indiaman's crew and the water ; or even try our own, or the opposite side of the island, and carry off the other boats to the wreck ; after which we might keep off till the schooner appeared, as she couldn't be long of doing in this weather.

“ I had just stolen back to the men and Mr Rollock, when all at once there was a wild cry, not twenty yards off, among the brushwood. A heavy blow and a struggle, in the midst of which three shots, one after the other, were heard from the cadets ; next minute, with oaths and curses to the mast-head, and a crash through amongst the branches in the dark, Foster

and his shipmates came making for the opening. Something horrible flashed through my mind as I fancied I had caught Finch's voice, whether one way or the other I couldn't say, for I had no thought at the time excepting for Violet. Shriek upon shriek broke from the ladies ere I well knew I had big Harry himself by the hairy throat of him, as he was aiming a left-handed stroke of his cutlass at the Judge, who had sprung betwixt him and his daughter. The strength of that ruffian was wonderful, for he flung me off and levelled Sir Charles Hyde at the same moment, the Judge's body tripping me.

"Jones and my own men, as well as the planter, were hard at work with the other five desperate villains, while the cadets and the second officer of the *Seringapatam* rushed in from the trees—all of it passing in half-a-minute. As I started to my feet, Foster had lifted Violet Hyde in his arms, and was dashing through the darkest of the wood with her toward the hollow, when, just as I was hard upon him, doubly to my horror, above all the screams of the ladies I could hear the wild drunken shouts of the crew below coming up from the beach like so many devils. Foster had got as far as the next opening where the rubbish of the hut was, and, no doubt catching the sound as well as myself, all at once he dropped the young lady on the grass—in a faint as she was, and her white dress stained with blood, as I thought from *herself*. 'Now, ye——' shouted he, turning bolt round till her moveless figure lay betwixt us, with a flourish of his cutlass, which I fancied was bloody too, 'who are *you*? You'll have a dozen on ye directly, but what's meat for the skipper's meat for the passenger, so——' 'Devil!' said I, through my teeth, as I edged round; and Foster was in the very act of rushing at me, whether he trod on her or not, when my voice or dress seemed to strike him in the dusk. 'How the bloody comfort did *you*——' said he, shrinking back for a moment; 'so much the better,' and he sprang forward again right upon me, with a swinging boarder's blow at my head, which flashed off my blade with a force enough to have shivered it, had it not been a first-rate old cut-and-thrust I had tried pretty stiffly before. If I hadn't been in such a fury of rage and a hurry at once, 'twould have been Harry's last hit; but, at the third he made, I caught him fair under it, the point going through and through his body, as I thrust him back stride by stride—his

cutlass waving fiercely all the time in the air clear of my head, for the stroke came under his arm. The moment he fell, though I knew nothing before that of where we were, there was a heavy plunge; I had nearly followed on top of him, as he went head-foremost down the tank-well under the trees; but next moment, without a thought more to him in the heat of the struggle, I was lifting Violet off the grass. What I did or what I said, to see if she would revive, I don't really know; but I remember as well as if it were last night the very sound of her voice as she told me she wasn't hurt. The affair in the wood below us had suddenly ceased during these five or ten minutes—indeed, as I found afterwards, Jones and my party had settled every one of the five, either altogether or for the time; but the uproar of more than twenty fierce voices could be heard beyond them, cursing and yelling as they came stumbling and crashing up amongst the brushwood in a body; while the ladies and their companions struggled up from all sides toward the height, wild with terror. I met Sir Charles Hyde hurrying to seek his daughter, however; and the moment he had her in his arms, I rushed down, pistol in hand, to join my men, who were standing firm below, as the mutineers burst into the opening, no doubt with the notion they had only the cadets to do with.

“‘Here, my lads!’ I sang out; ‘make every man of them prisoner—down with ’em to the schooner!’ And as I broke suddenly through in the starlight in the midst of them, Jones, Jacobs, the planter, and the other four man-o’-war’s-men sprang after me, one by one—taking the cue, and shouting as if to ever so many behind us, ‘Here they are, shipmates—this way—settle the blackguards!’ In fact, the moment I appeared, the gang of half-drunken fellows were taken aback. One of them roared as if he saw the very devil; and giving them no time to think, we drove them scattering down toward the beach. One of Foster’s party, however, being only stunned, had contrived to get down amongst them; and in a little while, seeing we didn’t follow, the whole lot of them appeared to get an inkling of the truth, on which they rallied. It wasn’t long ere I saw they had got desperate, and were planning to divide, and come somewhere over upon us round the heights; so that, in the dark, with our small party, not knowing their numbers, the best we could do was to gather

up toward the peak, and secure the ladies. Accordingly, we passed an uncomfortable enough time during the rest of the night, till daybreak, when still no signs of the schooner, as we saw in the clear to north-eastward. Frightful notions came into my head of something having happened to her; the mutineers below were on both sides of the island, and they held the watering-place. We hadn't provisions for a single breakfast to half the party of us—and the fellows being now fairly in for it, they could starve us out if they chose. You may conceive, accordingly, what a joyful sight met my eyes, when, on the dusk lifting off to northward, we could see the lovely craft under all sail not six miles off, bearing down before a fresh breeze for the deep end of the island!

"The wind had headed her off on her way back; and, knowing nothing of the wreck, Westwood might have landed at the mercy of the villains in the bush. But the minute we saw his boat out, the whole of us, save the Judge and the planter, made a clean charge down upon them—the schooner's men joining us with the oars and boat-stretchers; and in half-an-hour the whole gang, having lost heart, were taken and lashed fast by the wrists on-the beach, to a single man.

"On searching the watering-place during the day, we found someone had covered the mouth of the tank with sticks and leaves, through which Harry Foster had gone when he fell. The stuff had fallen in over him; and the well being evidently made deep into the rock, to hold water the longer, with the roots of the trees growing out into it, his body never came up. Somehow or other, no one liked to sound it to the bottom; but the thing that horrified all of us the most was to find Captain Finch himself lying quite dead amongst the brushwood near where the passengers had pitched their quarters, with a cut through his skull enough to have killed an ox. It was supposed Foster had suddenly come upon him, as he and his shipmates looked out for the hoard they thought the pirates had in the island, while Finch was on guard over the ladies. Whether the fellow took a new notion at the moment, or what it was, the whole gang of them made their rush upon the second mate and the cadets, the minute after the captain met his death.

"As for Jones, he told me he had noticed the dog watching the seamen below, and the idea got into his head of what

might happen. There was that about the animal to give one a dread you couldn't describe. How it had lived all this time, and how the customs came back on it, after growing perfectly wild, of carrying on like what it did that night, was a mystery; but Jones said he hadn't heard it bark before, neither had the man he knew of, since the time he was first left *alone* on White-water Island. In fact, the whole of us might have hunted it down before we left. But 'No!' Jones said; 'there's a perfect fiend in the brute, I do believe—yet it strikes me by this time, the creature belongs to—to the Almighty, sir!' The men and passengers had been taken off the Indiaman's wreck, which there was no chance of getting off the reef; so, taking out the best of her stores and the passengers' property, we had every soul aboard the schooner, and at last set sail to the south-east, meaning to go in at Madras, where a sloop might be sent to recover more from the ship. 'Twas with no ordinary state of things, from stem to stern, that we dropped White-water Island astern.

CHAPTER XXXII

"WELL, ma'am, the rest you may easily fancy. We made Madras Roads, and there I expected to lose sight of the Judge and his daughter again, as we did of most of the other passengers; but to my perfect delight Sir Charles preferred carrying out the voyage on to Calcutta in the schooner, where they had the after-cabins to themselves. The Indiaman's crew I kept, prisoners and all, till we should meet the frigate off the Sunderbunds.

"Just conceive standing up the hot Bay of Bengal with flagging south-westerly breezes, shifting at times to a brisk south-easter, or a squall, as we've done ourselves this week. The moon wasn't at the full then, of course, so we only had it like a reaper's sickle in the dog-watches; but it was fine weather, and you may imagine one sometimes contrived, betwixt Westwood and myself, to have Violet on the quarter-deck of an evening without the Judge. Tom would step forward suddenly to see a small pull taken on a sheet, and Snelling knew pretty well not to walk aft of the capstan;

so I could lean over the taffrail near her, and look at the schooner's wake glimmering and sparkling up in the bubbles astern.

"Then, to save trouble, you need but picture to yourselves some such sort of a daybreak as we had this morning; a cool blue cloudless sky all aloft, dappled to eastward with a mighty arch, as it were, of small white spots and flakes, as a perfect sea of light flows up into it before the sun under the horizon, and a pale slanting shaft of it seems to hang grey in the yellow above him.*

"The sea heaves deep-blue and deeper blue under the schooner; the wide flock of small clouds burn from gold to fire; the slanting streak of light fades and vanishes, and the sun comes up like a gush of flame—sending a stream of glittering radiance along the water to our starboard bow, while it shows a long flat line of land far on the other beam. The planter is smoking his first cheroot for the day at the stern gratings, when we make out three or four faint points over the streak of land shining like gold in the dawn; while at the same time three hazy pillars, as it were, are seen standing up betwixt sea and sky, beyond the rippling blue in the north-eastern board. 'Tis the spires of Juggernaut pagoda on one side; and as the brisk morning breeze drives the water into short surges, till the schooner rises the ship upon the other, all of a sudden she looms square and white upon our starboard bow. As the hull lifted higher and higher under her canvas, there was less doubt every few minutes of her being a frigate; and by the time Violet and her father were standing together on the quarter-deck, the glorious old *Hebe* was signalling us from her fore-royal-masthead, as she kept close on a wind to cross our course.

"We spoke the pilot-brig that evening, took out the pilot, and stood up into the mouth of the Hooghly with the night-tide in the moonlight—dropping the *Hebe* at Diamond Harbour next day; while Lord Frederick, and a Government gentleman he had with him from St Helena, went up to Calcutta with us in the schooner. The whole of the Indian's late crew and officers were left in the frigate till further notice, notwithstanding which we were pretty well crowded

* The zodiacal light, seen at sunrise and sunset.

on our way up ; Westwood and I were glad of a couple of hammocks in the half-deck ; and, in fact, I saw little more of Violet Hyde till they went ashore opposite Fort William.

“ In half-an-hour we were lying at anchor in the midst of the crowd of Indiamen, country ships, Arab craft, and all sorts of craft besides, stretching far up to the next reach ; the long front of flat-topped buildings, with their green venetians and balustrades, shining white over the row of trees on the right bank, like a string of palaces spreading back through the huge mass of the city to the pale, hot eastern sky—a tall cocoa-nut tree or a sharp spire breaking it here and there ; while the pile of Government House was to be seen dotted with adjutant-birds ; and the opposite shore showed far off in a line of green jungle, faced by a few gay-looking spots of bungalows. All the rest of the day Jones busied himself seeing all made regular and ship-shape below and aloft, till I began to think he had taken a fancy to the schooner, and meant to go with her and the frigate to the China seas. Next morning, however, as soon as breakfast was over in the cabin, he came to me and said that, as there was nothing more to be done at present aboard, according to our agreement he would bid us good-bye. Nothing I could say was of the least use, so at last I had to give it up. Having little money about me, however, except in bills, and intending to go ashore myself, I told him I should pay him his mate’s wages at once at a banker’s in the town. By the time I came on deck, Jones had hailed a dingey, and the native boatman paddled us to the ghaut below the Sailors’ Home together.

“ I had shaken hands with him, and stood watching him from the bank verandah, as his manly figure, in the blue jacket, white duck trousers, and straw hat, passed away down Flag Street, stepping like a seaman fresh from blue water through a stream of Hindoos in white muslin, Mussulman servants, tall-capped Armenians, Danes, Frenchmen, Chinamen, Arabs, and Parsees. Three or four Coolies with painted umbrellas were shouting and scrambling in his way, mentioning their names, salaaming, and s’ahbing him to the nines ; a couple of naked black boys were trying to brush his shoes in the dust ; a tray of native sweetmeats seemed to be shoved every now and then under his nose ; and two or three children

with heads as big as pumpkins were stuck before him, their mothers begging for 'Buckshish! buckshish!' Jones held on like a man accustomed to every sort of foreign scenes in the world; and, out of curiosity to see where he would go, I followed him for a little towards the thick of the noise and crowd, through Tank Square, where the water-carriers were sprinkling the ground from the sheep-skins on their backs as they walked, serpent-charmers and jugglers exhibiting, and a dirty Fakir rolling at the corner in seeming agony, with a crowd of liberty-men in Sunday toggery all round him.

"Jones looked up at the church steeping in the white heat, and across the glare of light to the city beyond, standing like a man that didn't know what to do, or hadn't seen Calcutta before; then passed carelessly by the half-slued sailors, who hailed him as if he were a ship. At length he got to the turn of a street running into the native town, where you caught a glimpse of it swarming this way and that with turbans in the close overhanging bazaars. Some Hindoo procession or other was coming along with tom-toms, gongs, tambourines, and punkahs, sweeping on through a babel of heathenish cries and songs; a knot of dancing-girls, with red flowers in their sleek black hair, could be seen in a hackery drawn by two hump-backed bullocks; and a white Brahmin bull was poking its head amongst the heaps of fruit at a stall; whilst you heard a whole ship's crew hurraing and laughing amongst the confusion, as they drove along. Suddenly, I saw Jones hail a palanquin near him, and get in. The four mud-coloured bearers took the pole of it on their shoulders, fore and aft—greasy-looking fellows, with ochre-marks on their noses and foreheads, a tuft of hair tied back on their heads like women, and as naked as they were born, save the cloth round their middle—and next moment away they trotted, grunting and swinging the palanquin, till I lost sight of them in the hubbub. 'Twas the last I saw of Jones."

Here the captain stopped; the *Gloucester's* crew were getting the anchors off her fore-castle to her bows for next day, when the light-ship off the Sandheads was expected to be seen; and, from his manner and his silence together, he evidently considered the yarn at an end. "That's all then?"

carelessly asked the surgeon, who was a chess-player, and had heard only this part of the Captain's adventures, and the first two, so that he appeared to perceive a slight want of connection. "All?" was the unanimous voice of the lady passengers, most of whom had been faithful listeners—the younger ones were obviously disappointed at something.

"Why, yes," said Captain Collins, with a look which might be interpreted either as modest or "close"—"the fact is, I fancied the affair might serve to while away a single evening or so, and here have I been yarning different nights all this time! 'Tis owing to my want of practice, no doubt, ma'am." "Come, come," said the matron of the party, "you must really give us some idea of a *dénouement*. These girls of mine won't be satisfied without it, Captain Collins; they will think it no story at all, otherwise!"

"An end to it, you mean?" answered he. "Why, ma'am, if there were an *end* to it, it couldn't be a 'short' yarn at all—that would be to finish and 'whip' it, as we say, before it's long enough for the purpose: whereas, luckily, my life hasn't got to a close yet."

"Oh!" said the lady, "no sea casuistry for *us*; besides, I am aware of the sequel, you know!" "Why, ma'am," answered the Captain, looking up innocently, "it wasn't for two years and a half afterwards that I—I settled, you know! Do you mean me to tell you all that happened in that time, about the Frenchman, and what befell the schooner in the China seas? 'twould last the voyage home; but if you'll go *back* with me, I've no particular objection, now I've got into the way."

"No, no, my dear Captain," said the lady, "we have had enough for the present of your nautical details—I beg pardon—but tell us how you succeeded in——"

"Well," interrupted the narrator, rather hastily, "'twas somewhat thus: I was at home at Croydon, being by that time first lieutenant of the *Hebe*; but she was just paid off. One morning, at breakfast, the letter-bag from the village was brought in as usual, my mother taking them out, reading off all the addresses through her spectacles, while Jane made the coffee. My mother handed Jane a ship-letter, which she put somewhere in her dress, with a blush, so that I knew in a moment it must be from Tom Westwood, who was in the

Company's civil service in India, up-country. 'None for me, mother?' asked I eagerly; for the fact was, I had got one or two at different times, at Canton and the Cape of Good Hope, during the two years. 'Yes, Ned,' said my mother, eyeing it again and again, anxiously enough, as I thought; 'there is—but I fear it is some horrid thing from those Admirals'—the Admiralty, she meant—'and they will be sending you off immediately—or a war, or something. Oh dear me, Ned,' exclaimed the good woman, quite distressed, 'won't you do as I wish you, and stay altogether!' By the Lord Harry! when I opened it, 'twas a letter from Lord Frederick Bury, who had succeeded to his eldest brother's title while we were out, saying he had the promise of a commandership for me, as soon as a new brig for the West-India station was ready. 'I shan't have to go for six or seven months at any rate, mother,' said I, 'by which time I shall be confounded tired of the land, I know!' She wanted me to buy a small estate near Croydon, shoot, fish, and dig, I suppose; while Jane said I ought to marry, especially as she had a girl with money in her eye for me. Still, they saw it was no use, and began to give it up.

"Why I never heard at all from a certain quarter, I couldn't think. Till that time, in fact, I had been as sure of her proving true as I was of breezes blowing; but now I couldn't help fancying all sorts of tyranny on the Judge's part and her mother's, not to speak of Tom's uncle, the Councillor. I went down the lane for the twentieth time, past the end of the house they had lived in, where the windows had been shuttered up and the gates close ever since I came. All of a sudden, this time, I saw there were workmen about the place, the windows open, and two servants washing down the yellow wheels of a travelling-carriage. I made straight back for our house, went up to Jane, who was at her piano in the drawing-room, and asked, quite out of breath, *who* was come to the house over the park behind us. 'Did you not know that old Nabob was coming back from India?' said Jane. 'His face was getting too yellow, I suppose; and, besides, his wife is dead—from his crossness, no doubt. But the young lady is an heiress, Ned, and as I meant to tell you, from good authority'—here the sly creature looked away into her music—'passionately fond of the sea, which means, you know, of naval officers.' 'The devil she is, Jane!' I broke out; 'what did Westwood

mean by that?—but *when* are they coming, for Heaven's sake?' 'Why,' said Jane, 'I believe, from what I heard our gardener say, they arrived last night.' 'Then, by Jove, my dear girl!' said I, 'I'll tell you a secret—and mind, I count on you!'

"My little sister was all alive in a moment, ran to the door and shut it, then settled herself on the sofa to hear what I had to say, as eagerly as you please. So I told her what the whole matter was, with the state of things when we left Calcutta. Jane seemed to reckon the affair as clear as a die; and you've no notion what a lot of new ropes she put me up to in a concern of the kind, as well as ways to carry it out ship-shape to the end, in spite of the Judge—or else to smooth him over.

"The long and short of it was, I didn't leave till about seven months after, when the *Ferret* was put in commission; but by that time it was all smooth sailing before me. The Judge had got wonderfully softened; and you may be sure, I continued to see Violet Hyde pretty often before I went to sea. You'd scarce believe it, but, after that twelve months' cruise, I actually didn't leave the land for two years, which I did owing to the chance I had of seeing sharp service in the Burmese war, up the rivers, while General Campbell had tough work with them inland. So that's all I can say, ma'am!"

"Very good, sir!" was the surgeon's cool remark. "And, in fact, sir, I fancy if every one of us were to commence telling his whole life over, with everything that happened to him and his friends, he must stop short somewhere—however long it might be!" The Captain smiled; they sat on the poop talking for awhile, sometimes saying nothing, but watching the last night at sea.

The pilot-brig is spoken to windward next morning, even while the deep-sea lead-line is being hove to sound the bottom. Falling sudden from the foreyard, the weight takes the long line from hand after hand back to the gangway, till it trembles against the ground. 'Tis drawn up slowly, the wet coil secured, and the bottom of the lead showing its little hollow filled with signs of earth—"Grey sand and shells!" They stand on till the pilot is on board, the low land lifts and lengthens before the ship; but the flow of the tide has yet to come, and take

them safely up amongst the winding shoals into the Indian river's mouth. A new land, and the thoughts of strange new life, the gorgeous sights and fantastic realities of the mighty country of the Mogul and Rajahs, crowd before them after the wide solitary sea. The story is already all but forgotten.—
AND THE ANCHOR IS LET GO !

THE END.

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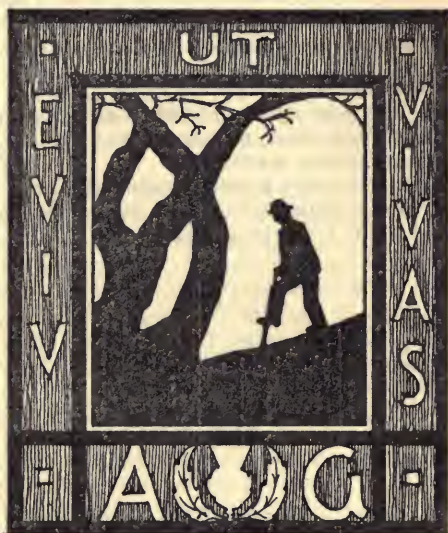
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